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CHIN-CHIN

OR

THE CHINAMAN AT HOME

BY

TCHENG-KI-TONG
(LATE OF THE IMPERIAL CHINESE LEGATION)

TRANSLATED BY

R. H. SHERARD

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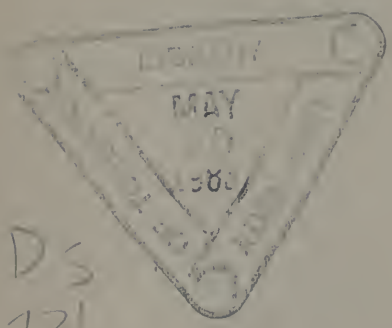

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PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR

THE friendly welcome accorded by the English Public to my "Chinese Painted by Themselves" has encouraged me to publish this translation of my last work.

Old Epicurus summed up his philosophy in pleasures well understood. The peoples of the world, all epicureans in a certain measure, amused themselves before him, and have amused themselves since, each after his own fashion.

I do not think I shall displease the people of the Country often called "Merry England" in bringing to their notice "The Chinaman at Home."

INTRODUCTORY

OUR pleasures are not such as to shock modesty; they are simple and honest, as becomes an ancient nation, which has left the age of youthful follies long behind it, has due self-respect, and knows how to amuse itself decently.

In my book, "Chinese Tales," I endeavoured to show the minor details of the life of my compatriots, whose political and social customs I have described in my other book, "The Chinese Painted by Themselves." The object of this new book is to give a picture of our private amusements and of our small public fêtes. It belongs, accordingly,

to anthropological literature, describing as it does a series of ethnological phenomena, games, ceremonies, and fêtes, which, however much they may resemble those to be seen in all other countries, have, nevertheless, a special character in each country. This character depends largely on the national conceptions of the people under consideration.

Everybody amuses himself as he thinks best. This affirmation is as true for nations as it is for individuals. Our joys and our ways of manifesting them are they not the expression of our individuality? And when a whole people rejoices in a certain manner, does not that mean that it offers in its fêtes a kind of picture of its inner life, a synthesis of its dearest aspirations and desires? Our pleasures are determined by our moral and philosophical, political, and social views. Religion has much also to do in fashioning them

according to her likeness. The character of a nation is never better shown than in its enjoyments—its fêtes; in one word, in its pleasures. Tell me how you amuse yourself, and I will tell you what you are.

In the task I have laid upon myself of revealing the Asiatic East to the European West, it seems to me that this new chapter will not be out of place. In any case, the author will be sufficiently rewarded if the reader—albeit only for a moment—finds some pleasure in turning over the leaves of the book he has written.

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CHIN-CHIN;

OR,

THE CHINAMAN AT HOME

CHAPTER I

THE CHINESE HOME

I REMEMBER reading in Mr. Paleologue's clever book, "L'Art Chinois," the statement "that China never had but one single style of architecture, throughout all the periods of its history, for her public and private, civic, or ecclesiastical buildings."

Now, a close observer will notice in our buildings a great variety of styles, the

fineness of which naturally is lost upon those who do not take the trouble to examine them carefully. It is just like a passer-by looking at some of the new streets in Paris, where all the houses are built by one and the same building company, and resemble one another externally; or at the grand avenues in New York City, or the long *strassen* in Karlsruhe, spread out round a central square in the shape of a fan. At first sight one cannot help the exclamation that these buildings produce a desperately monotonous impression.

But should you pay the architect a visit and examine the plans of these various constructions, you cannot fail to notice that not one interior resembles another. The difference is as slight as the physiognomies of different people, who have the same features but have different faces.

It is true that long ago there was little variety in our architectural styles, but in spite of that it can be asserted that each of our cities has a special character, and

presents, as far as its buildings are concerned, distinctive features.

There are many reasons for this want of variety. In the first place, those foreign elements, which so often so profoundly modified European architecture, have been almost completely wanting in China. Then it must be remembered that official prescriptions regulate the style of houses for different functionaries, a custom which must necessarily limit architectural originality and fancy; and then there is tradition, which is so powerful in our country, and which did not allow of any modification of the pure Chinese style, which had been consecrated by the use of centuries.

Let us now examine the different kinds of Chinese houses.

In the northern districts, less favoured by Nature, buildings are generally constructed of earth. It is only the palaces and the houses of rich people of which the framework is of wood. In spite of the severity of the climate and the quantities

of dust which are brought by the wind from the sandy regions, these houses have, generally speaking, two stories, in which they differ considerably from the houses in the south, which have rarely more than one. The walls are low, with but a very slight curve at the top, whereas in the south this curve, which we style "the saddle," is very pronounced. These walls are called "fire-walls," because they are intended to protect the house against fire.

The upper storey is called "the pavilion of the horse races," a name I have never been able to account for, as the staircases were never such as to allow of horses being brought up them. This upper storey is generally used as a place of pleasure, the ground floor being preferred as an ordinary dwelling-place. The Chinese love symmetry in all things, and so, no matter the size of the ground on which they build, their houses are always constructed so that the drawing-room is just opposite the entrance door, and that on either side of it there be

one or two rooms exactly the same. Instead of speaking of our houses as having so many rooms, we say, "It has such a number of rooms on the front—three, five, seven," &c.

The following is a description of a good average middle-class dwelling:

On entering you find yourself in a large antechamber, flanked on the right and on the left by a servants' room. Facing you are three doors, one large and two small, giving access to a courtyard, which is entered by descending a staircase of three steps. On either side of the courtyard there is first a paved gallery, then a room. One of these rooms is reserved for the children of the house, the other is a smoking-room, or small drawing-room.

The drawing-room is reached by ascending the three steps on the other side of the yard. On its left and right hand side there are one, two, or three rooms. Behind the drawing-room is the dining-room, flanked also on either side with one,

two, or three rooms. Then comes a second courtyard, with the kitchen and lumber-room on the right and left. If the house is a large one, you will find three, five, or seven more rooms behind this courtyard. The same distribution may be repeated over and over again where the habitation is very vast. The garden, with its kiosques and its artificial rockeries, is on one of the wings, and is surrounded with walls.

The rent of an ordinary house, such as the one that I have just described, is about two pounds eight shillings a year.

The roof is more or less elevated, but it always is very sloping, and is covered with overlapping tiles, so as to allow the rain to run off easily.

The windows are large, the framework being of wood. The panes are of glass, silk, or transparent paper, according to the part of the country. Instead of endeavouring to protect themselves against draughts, the Chinese do all they can to procure currents of air through the house.

The interior decoration is generally very luxurious. The prominent parts of the wood-work are carved, the flat parts are varnished. The walls are hidden behind paintings representing historical scenes; the wall which fronts the drawing-room is usually painted with a subject referring to the rank of the master of the house. On entering the drawing-room the eye is at once caught by the sight of a gilt and carved box, which hangs from the horizontal rafter under the roof. On either side of it is a large gilt dragon, who seems to be guarding it. This box contains the patents of nobility or commissions of official rank held by the proprietor.

The paper on which the words "Happiness" or "Long Life," which are given to members of the family by the Emperor according to their merits, are also hung up in this place.

The furniture of the drawing-room is extremely simple. There is a long, large table in the middle, with eight chairs ar-

ranged on the two sides; between each set of two chairs is a little square tea-table. Then there are two square stools.

The places of visitors are arranged according to their rank; the stools are always reserved for the master of the house. When the visit is a ceremonious one, or there is a fête in the family, the chairs, which are usually of marble or of bamboo, are covered with embroidered red satin covers, which is just the contrary of what is done in Europe, where the furniture is uncovered for receiving. There are always a large mirror, a vase of flowers, a plate of decorative fruits, and a clock on the drawing-room table. In the centre stands a scent-burner.

On the walls are rolls of autographs or paintings from the pens and pencils of celebrities of style or of art. Very few nick-nacks are to be seen in our drawing-rooms, which we make as severe and simple as we can. Only occasionally does one see a few nick-nacks in the little draw-

ing-rooms, or in the pleasure kiosk in the garden. The greater part are hidden away in cupboards, and are only produced at the Fête of the Moon, of which I speak further on, or on certain religious festivals.

We have neither cupboards in the walls, such as are the delight of Parisian housewives, nor alcoves in our houses in China.

This is a fair description of a Chinese home. I do not speak of the dwelling-places of the poor, which are as sad as little decorative. Happiness, it has been said, has no history, but it is wealth that alone admits of description. Misery is not to be depicted, unless, as in Theophile Gautier's "Capitaine Fracasse," it is lodged in an old castle, picturesquely in ruins.

CHAPTER II

RELIGIOUS AND NATIONAL FÊTES

IT is terribly hot, forty degrees in the shade, and summer has only just begun. It is the fifth day of the fifth moon, the date on which the Fête of the Dragon is celebrated.

The town changes its aspect completely. This is owing to the numberless red papers which are stuck on every door, and on which can be read wishes of happiness formulated in the most diversified manner. At the side of these papers are two bunches of Indian grass, with the roots tightly tied up with red strings, nailed to the door. It is a popular belief that this plant, with its

sword-shaped leaves, drives away all evil spirits.

After having performed the usual sacrifices before the tablets of our ancestors, we feast *en famille* on ceremonial dishes, and drink that wine, tinctured with orpiment, which, according to a very general opinion, destroys the germs of epidemic diseases for the whole ensuing year.

When noon strikes we hasten to put bowls of water in the courtyard to catch the rays of the sun, which is in the centre of the sky. It is said that the water thus irradiated renders excellent services to women in labour.

After breakfast we go to the West Lake to see the dragon canoe races. These are very long flat boats, manned by from twenty to thirty oarsmen. The figure-head is either a colossal dragon or a prancing horse. A sailor astride on the animal holds in his hands a large flag, the movements of which serve as commands to the helmsman, who

is standing motionless at the stern. Behind the dragon is an orchestra, which fills the air with the rolling of drums, mingled with the thunder of the tam-tams.

The goal is seen far off; sometimes it is a living duck. When the boat approaches the bird dives under and tries to escape, but it is usually caught after a short chase, and brought up in triumph, struggling and squealing. More often, however, it is a large piece of bamboo, to which is fastened a piece of rich silk stuff, the offering of some society. The winner keeps this as his prize.

As soon as the signal has been given the struggle begins; flags fly, waving now to the left, now to the right, indicating the way to be followed to the human statue, who, seated at the helm, guides the effort of the sailors. Urged on by the numerous oars, the canoes glide rapidly over the water, like gigantic centipedes, amidst the cries of the spectators, crowding together on the banks, or on the decks and in the

cabins of the pleasure-junks anchored along the river side.

Then may be seen the fluttering of a thousand fans, beating in unison with the hearts of the spectators. The waves, driven up by the canoes running to the banks, bury, for the moment, the lotus flowers and water-lilies, which soon, however, reappear fresher and more pure for their short immersion; the broad leaves of the nenuphar rising up again, bring with them some of the water of the river, and let it fall off again in cascades of glittering pearls. Now they are again immersed, once more to rise; in a continual coming and going, which lasts for many hours.

This is the Chinese nautical Grand Prix, and the aspect of the lake is really fairy-like. Imagine the boxes at the Grand Opera in Paris, or the grand stand at Longchamps, placed on floating flower barges in the middle of a river, with panes of glass of every colour; add to this picture ladies in grand toilettes, and

men with radiant faces, and you will have a fairly accurate idea of this very popular fête.

After the races the foot-passengers disperse and the people disembark from the junks. The sun not having yet set, everybody uses the rest of the afternoon in taking a little rest, or in enjoying the fresh air of the country. Some go to the monastery near the lake, others repose under the great trees which are round an old tomb.

The latter is the burying-place of an ancient and celebrated man of letters of the town, who, during his lifetime, had his last abode constructed in an admirable site on the banks of the water. Instead of the usual inscriptions which celebrate the virtues of the deceased, the man of letters caused to be graven on the stones of his tomb his own poems and those of his friends.

Here are two of the best-known lines of his :

"Behind the carpet of the cornflowers and under
the shade of the pine trees,
I shall receive throughout all time the perfume
of the incense which my children will bring
to me in offering."

I went with some friends to the monastery, where we were received in the most hospitable fashion. The Buddhist priests offered us first of all a cup of delicious tea, and afterwards invited us to dine with them. It was a dinner without meat — for the Buddhist priests do not eat meat—but an excellent dinner for all that. First of all because it was a change from what we were accustomed to, and then because, in spite of the fact that no meat is used, the cuisine of these priests fully deserves its reputation of exquisite delicacy. They prayed us to come again in a month to taste the Lichi fruits, for, said they, their garden possessed eighteen trees of the best kind, which they called "the eighteen young ladies."

To depict to you the picturesque situation of this monastery, it will be sufficient for

me to quote a passage from a celebrated poem, which is engraved on a rock behind the altar to Buddha:

> "Whilst the sound of the bells draws itself out and seems to be lost in the green mist of the twilight,
> The dreaming poet walks all alone amongst the ten thousand trees."

As it is getting late, we have made up our minds to sleep at the monastery.

I may as well mention here that in China the monasteries are a kind of hotel. There is always a large number of rooms set aside for the reception of visitors. We took advantage of this, because at night-fall the gates of the city are locked, and accordingly we were locked out. We had no reason to regret this, because in the evening we were able to be present at the religious service of the Buddhists, and could convince ourselves that once they have finished with their religious duties these monks are quite ordinary mortals, very gay, fond of laughter and amusement. We made

verses together, as we sat drinking rice-wine, and we all came to the conclusion that these priests have nothing in common with their Puritan colleagues in Europe.

In our conversation, as well as in the poems we composed, not an allusion was made to religious or even philosophical subjects. Nothing was written or spoken about but the moon, flowers, and the beauties of Nature. These good people understood that there is nothing more detestable than "to talk shop."

One of my friends asked one of these priests how he could live without any family, the Buddhist priests not being allowed to marry. The priest answered him in verse, saying:

"I do not wish the mud to soil the leaves of the lotus.
I have a very sharp knife to cut the threads of the nenuphar with."

In short, they were all very gay, and our conversation lasted after this fashion until

break of day. A most harmless and *comme il faut* debauch.

And that evening, seated on his lotus-flower, with his bald head and his stereotyped smile, Buddha did not sulk.

CHAPTER III

THE FÊTE OF THE MOON

THIS fête is celebrated in the eighth month of the year. It lasts six days, beginning on the 10th and ending on the 15th, with the full moon. It is thought that on that night the moon is larger than at any other time in the year.

This fête is made the occasion of all kinds of amusements, and specially it is kept by sending to one's friends all sorts of presents in the shape of the moon, as also by the exhibition of nick-nacks.

One buys a quantity of little statues, representing genii, immortals, Buddhas. All these celestials are arranged on the land-

ings amongst the objects collected by the family, treasures which, imprisoned all the year round, are only produced on this solemn occasion. The centre of the exhibition is always filled by a large pagoda, which is illuminated, like the house itself, at every window.

Outside, fireworks are let off and crackers exploded. Indoors, music is played to cheer the reunion of friends and of the family. Mutual invitations are issued to come and admire the richness and the good taste of the different collections.

At midnight, on the 15th, everybody sits down in the courtyard to a great banquet, with which the fête is terminated. This banquet is specially given to await the descent of the goddess of the moon. The myth will have it, that on that day she leaves her celestial abode to come down and listen to the wishes of the mortals. Needless to say, that nobody ever yet saw the graceful inhabitant of our satellite; but it is difficult to drive out of the people's

minds traditions which have been handed down for centuries from father to son.

A story is, however, told of an old woman who was favoured one night with a visit from the Chinese Diana, who asked her what she wanted, and who promised to grant all that she could wish for. Dazzled by the splendour of the costume and the imposing beauty of the lady, the old woman stood speechless, and could not say a word. At last, encouraged by the kindly insistence of the queen of the moon, the old woman summoned up enough courage to carry her hand to her mouth, meaning thereby that she only wished to have enough to eat for the rest of her life.

The apparition made a sign of acquiescence, and remounted to heaven. The next morning the old woman was seen wearing a gigantic, full beard. The goddess had not understood her gesture.

The moon is the patroness of poetry. Autumn, moreover, the most beautiful of

seasons, with its wealth of chrysanthemums and oleas of sweet perfume in flower, furnishes also subjects dear to the poets. This fête is accordingly more aristocratic and more literary than the others, which have little to offer but popular pleasures. Thus, to celebrate it, pretence is made of transforming the terrestrial abodes into so many crystal palaces to harmonise with the splendours which are believed to exist in the celestial regions.

I have said that the moon is the patroness of poetry. It is she, indeed, who, from the earliest ages, has at all times known how to inspire poets—now with sad, now with joyous songs. It is she who unites in common contemplation the looks and the thoughts of lovers separated by long distances from each other; it is she who consoles the unhappy despairing in their solitudes. The most intimate secrets of the heart are confided to her, the softest and sweetest wishes are formed before her transparent mirror. Who shall then be

astonished if poetry cherish this kindly queen of the night?

Here are some verses dedicated to this star by our poets:

"Raising my glass to drink with the moon,
I notice that we are three—
The moon, my shadow, and myself.
The moonlight comes right up to my bed,
Covering the floor with a dazzling surface,
Which at first sight I take for ice;
Then, noticing that it is the moon,
I fall to thinking of my native land."

The number of legends attaching to the moon is so large that it is impossible to relate them all. Some say that the goddess who inhabits the lunar palace is still unwedded. Others maintain that she is a tearful widow. The most original of these legends tells us that the goddess is the wife of a celebrated archer, of the reign of Han, named Haou-I. He had already shot down nine suns with his terrible bow, and was just going to fire at the tenth—the only one that remains to us—when the sun-god said to him, "Give me grace of this

one, which I need for the light of the world. In return I will give you a magic draught which will give you the power to go and to dwell in the sun itself." At the same time he told the archer the day and the hour on which he was to take the enchanted potion.

Haou-I committed the imprudence of confiding his secret to his wife, who, not willing to believe the truth of what he said, tried the draught forthwith. Immediately she grew light as a bird and flew away to the moon.

Is this not like reading Jules Verne, perfected, in the second century, for it is from that century that this legend dates.

Here is another myth, the translation of the poem of which I have given elsewhere. I consider it very graceful. It tells that Emperor Ming-Houang, of the Thang dynasty, had travelled in a dream to the moon. It was there that he learned a melody entitled "Dress of Rainbow and of Feathers." This air was the cause of

an insurrection, which nearly upset his throne. One of his officers, in love with a favourite who sang this celestial melody in perfection, revolted, and the Emperor could only preserve his throne by sacrificing the life of his favourite. So true it is that always and in all things one must seek the woman, even in the moon.

CHAPTER IV

THE FEAST OF LANTERNS

THE Feast of Lanterns comes almost directly after that of the New Year. It may almost be said that one is the complement of the other, as the latter in date takes place from the tenth day to the fifteenth day of the first moon, and as the holidays of the New Year are prolonged from the twentieth day of the twelfth moon of the dying year to the twentieth day of the first moon of the new year.

During this month of holiday, all official business is suspended. The seals which represent the official signatures are locked up in their cases.

It is the use made, in incredible quantities,

of all sorts of lanterns that gives its name and its originality to this feast. The Chinese are very fond of making these lanterns, and give them a luxury of form, and employ in their manufacture a variety of material which defy imagination. There is not on that day a single nook of the mighty Empire which is not thus lighted up. To carry out an illumination on such a scale, it will be readily understood that something more is needed than is seen elsewhere when lanterns are used for illuminations.

To get a more exact idea of the character of our illuminations, imagine one of your large toy-shops filled with transparent lanterns — horses, lions, sheep, elephants, soldiers, horsemen, parasols, flowers, grotesque figures, fantastic animals, &c. All the imitations of living things are associated with all the varieties of fancy to transform light silk or translucid paper into multi-coloured lanterns, now simple, now double. These latter turn round and round, driven by the motion of the heated air,

and display the series of pictures with which they are filled. There is not a thing in nature, or out of it, that does not on that day take shape of lantern.

A gigantic lantern representing a dragon is carried about in the public places to the sound of music. This is composed of a framework of wicker covered with transparent stuff, on which the dragon's scales are painted. It is mounted on staves, which are held by the bearers. Anybody can get the procession to stop before his house, or he can have it enter his courtyard if he wants a private representation. In this case, all he has to do is to let off a certain number of crackers as the procession passes his house, so as to let the bearers know that they have to stop. After the performance, which consists in making the dragon fly about in every direction, cake and wine are offered to the musicians and to the bearers, but never money, for the procession is always composed of people belonging to the highest

classes of society, who do this for their pleasure. The European torchlight procession gives but a very feeble idea of our dragon walk.

When a marriage takes place in a family, the relations of the bride send her on her wedding-day a lantern representing a divinity holding a child in his hand. If in the second year the wife has not had a child, another lantern is sent her representing an orange; the word orange in Chinese is synonymous to the words "make haste." The lantern thus constitutes a kind of punning reminder to her of her duty. Lanterns are also sent from the local temples to any house in the parish in which either a recent marriage, or a birth, or a literary success has taken place.

The subjects of these lanterns differ according to circumstances; the bearers are always accompanied by an orchestra. One sees a large lantern, on which are written enigmas, riddles, and puzzles, in almost every street. The passers-by are supposed to try their

skill at guessing these puzzles, and those who succeed get as a reward some letter-paper, or some brushes, ink, fireworks, sweets, &c. When the problem propounded is some clever *jeu de mots*, or a comic answer is given, you can hear the whole street ringing with shouts of healthy laughter.

Formerly under the dynasty of the Hans, it was forbidden to be out in the streets of nights except during these feasts. On these occasions the bridge gates of the city remained wide open, and the padlocks of the bridge railings were unlocked all night.

Poetry has celebrated these nights of popular gaiety:

"The trees on fire and the flowers in silver form bouquets on every side,
And the iron padlocks no longer exist on the starlit bridges.
A fine dust pursues on all the roads the perfumed feet of the horses;
And the moon shining brilliantly, accompanies the walkers;
These for the most part belong to the radiant youth,

Who sing so joyously that one fancies one
hears the celebrated melody of Lo-Mei-Hoa,
or the fall of the petals of the plum-tree.
This night it is not forbidden to walk abroad,
Therefore let the waters flow slowly and with-
out undue haste."

Another poem says:

"Two phœnixes come down from heaven with their
triumphal chariot.
Six dragons rise from the bottom of the sea bear-
ing a mountain on their backs."

Does not this remind you of the "Isoline" of Catulle Mendes?

Let me quote a few more lines:

"What charitable hand has scattered all these lotus
seeds,
Which at one and the same time flower in every
corner of the city?"

All this literature will show what a brilliant fête it is.

There are, of course, besides, family meetings, parties, where wine and poetry help to bring the solemnity to its end indoors; while, in the streets, the pleasures

of the joyous crowd are prolonged until the morning.

Lanterns have this advantage over gas and electricity, that they give a softer light and present more of that variety and irregularity with which life loves to surround itself, so as to escape as much as possible from the monotony and uniformity of ordinary existence. They lend themselves more readily to poetry, and realise in a small way what large illuminations do in a greater.

The members of the constituted bodies also take part in the illuminations. When officials go out at night, they are always accompanied by lanterns, on which are written in red the name and titles of the dignitary. On the evening of the feast, these lanterns decorate the house of the functionary, like so many visiting cards, welcoming the public.

In conclusion, let it be said that the little folk, without whom there is no real pleasure, have also their rôles to play and their part to take in the general gaiety. Fruits are

cut up for them, especially oranges, and the children light these up with a little candle, and carry their make-shift lanterns round the streets. Some of these fruit-lanterns are wonderfully and beautifully carved and decorated.

Everything, in one word, is lighted up; so that could one take on that night a bird's-eye view of China from the car of some balloon, she would show like a sky starred with thousands and millions of lanterns, and the dazzled aeronaut would be forced to admit, as he looked down on the last day of the feast of the New Year, that in China, at least, we never have a gloomy New Year's Day.

CHAPTER V

THE FEAST OF THE TWO STARS

THE two stars, called Niou-Lang, the Shepherd, and Tsi-Nu, the Weaver, are situated, the first on the eastern shore of the Milky Way—the Tien-Ho, as we call it, or River of Heaven—and the other on the western shore. According to ancient astronomical observations they only meet once a year, and this meeting is supposed to take place in the night of the seventh day of the seventh moon.

Legend pretends that the Shepherd was married to the Weaving Woman, and that to punish them for some fault committed in the celestial regions—a fault analogous to that of Adam and Eve—the sovereign of the skies

separated them eternally. Once only in the year did he allow them to see each other for an instant by crossing the stream of water which, during the rest of the year, put an insurmountable barrier between their loves. On that day the magpies, carrying straw in their beaks, go and build a bridge over the river, which enables the lovers to cross over dry-footed. I will add that on that day the magpies moult. A quantity of other legends naturally have been grafted on to this one. Thus it is said that the rain which falls on the eve of this feast cleans the chariot of heaven; whilst if it rains on the day itself, it is said that that is the tears of joy of the two lovers; if on the morrow, it is their tears of sorrow at their fresh separation. The feasts celebrated on this occasion vary slightly according to the locality. The object of some of the celebrations is to beg of the Weaving Woman for skill at the loom; others take advantage of the fact that on the day of their reunion the two stars are more friendly disposed, and implore their pity.

A table is usually spread on these occasions on the balcony of the pavilion, and laid with fruits, flowers, wine, candles, and incense. Low prayers are whispered. Those who pray are young women whose husbands are absent. Those who wish to become skilful workwomen close a spider up in a box. When they open the box on the morrow they can tell from the appearance of the web, which the spider has spun in the meanwhile, whether the Weaving Woman has heard their prayers or not. If the web is neat and regular they may hope for skill also.

Formerly, under the reign of the Thangs, this anniversary was celebrated with considerable splendour in the palace of the Emperor. It is said that towers about 1000 feet in height—about that of the Eiffel Tower —were constructed of silk for the occasion, and that on these towers the favourites of the Emperor made music and song in honour of celestial loves. Girls vied with one another who should soonest thread, by

the light of the moon, needles with nine eyelets, and the winner was proclaimed the most skilful of all.

A poem says :

> "It is easier to thread needles by moonlight than to hold a thread straight while the wind is blowing."

There has been very much poetry written about this feast. Some of the poems are in praise of the skill of the Weaving Woman ; others lament her too ephemeral happiness ; but the most numerous are those in which the luckless in love envy the lot of the lovers untied in heaven, and pray them to favour them, so that they also may have a time of meeting, however short. The most celebrated of these poems is one written by a sceptical philosopher, who says :

> "They are immortals, and yet they fear the water. I am inclined to doubt that they are very skilful people."

In short, this feast is liked chiefly as a pleasant holiday, and as affording a theme for the poets.

In the seventh moon the great heats have passed away, and advantage is taken of the soft zephyr and the purity of the sky, which is generally to be noticed at this season of the year, to sit out on the balcony of the house, and to enjoy the cool air whilst drinking rice-wine. The hypothesis of these two invisible beings inhabiting the two stars is rather a pretext than a belief, I am inclined to think. Long separations, always so sad, and the meeting again, which is all the more delightful because it is so unfrequent, are symbolised in this legend. The two stars meeting across the Milky Way in a clear sky, under the burning and envious gaze of the other stars, and the light of the crescent-moon, form a graceful picture, which, by a pretty celestial dream, charms our spirit, greedy as it always is of the ideal, and glad to escape for a while from the truer but often more disappointing images of worldly realities.

CHAPTER VI

THE FEAST OF FLOWERS

THIS feast falls on the fifteenth day of the second moon, but is, in practice, prolonged until the end of spring. It is also called "the feast of mild warmth." This is the best season of the year, the mildest and the most charming. The trees, almost all in bloom at that time, alternating with the weeping willows, drooping down their long branches laden with green leaves, form, together with the picturesque pavilions, perspectives which over and over again have inspired the poet's song. There is not a private garden in the land which is not then transformed into a horticultural ex-

hibition. Poles of different colours are set up, ornamented with flags and laden with little bells, and in the middle all sorts of games are played, amongst others the game of butterflies. This game is unknown in Europe, and, therefore, merits a description here. Butterflies are caught, and a hair is attached to them; this hair is weighted with a scrap of paper, to prevent them from flying away out of reach, and then they are pursued by the women armed with their fans.

Other families go out into the country to pick flowers, to run in the fields, and to play the game we call the "lawn game." We have had emperors who were poets, and who, on that day, used to distribute verses composed by them on different kinds of plants. It was on this occasion that the Minister of Agriculture used to present to the Sovereign seeds of every plant under cultivation in his empire. In private houses, this is the day chosen for making rice-wine. The people of Su-Tcheang march out on

this day in solemn procession, to the sound of music, to the rice-fields, amidst crowds of spectators. This fête used to be very brilliant under the dynasty of the Thangs, emperors who delighted in simple pleasures in the midst of flowers. One of them used to give his favourites pieces of silk, having the colours of the spring flowers, on this feast. The silks were afterwards made into light spring dresses.

One year, when the feast fell in the midst of late winter weather, the Emperor had a glass house constructed, and had all the plants brought in to develop in the heat, and to the sound of the drum. This is the origin of glass houses.

One of our novelists relates that one of the favourites of the Emperor fell in love with a young man of letters who lived in the capital, and whose garden was traversed by a brook which flowed out of the imperial park. The young woman being shut up in the palace, jealously watched, had no means of corresponding

with him whom she loved. But love will always suggest ways and means, and it came to her to write a poem on the petal of a peony and to confide it to the stream. The young man of letters was lucky enough to find the peony-petal, and thus learned that in spite of the separation he was still loved. This feeling gave him so much courage that he set to work with great diligence and an extraordinary ardour, so that he was soon able to pass all his examinations, and to become a celebrated statesman. In reward of numerous services, he asked the Emperor to accord him the hand of the young woman, a request which his sovereign was unable to refuse. Thus a simple flower gave a great minister to the empire, and united two beings who thought themselves for ever separated.

CHAPTER VII

NEW YEAR'S DAY

THIS is the Feast of the Three Beginnings—that of the year, the months, and the days.

From break of day, which is saluted in every house with formidable detonations of crackers, all the functionaries of the capital betake themselves to the Imperial Temple to present their respective congratulations to the Sovereign in person before the tablet which bears the name of His Majesty. This duty accomplished, they present their homages in order to the temples of Heaven, of Confucius, of the God of Literature, and of the God of War. After this they pay

calls to each other, an exchange of courtesies which lasts for four or five days.

On entering a relation's house, it is the rule, first of all, to salute the tablets which represent the ancestors. If the visitors are newly married, besides tea and cakes, a bag of oranges and water-melon seeds is offered to them. Both these signify that it is hoped they may be blessed with a large family.

Parties are given every day in turn at the different houses of friends, and these are made the occasion for games of every description. At the same time presents are distributed amongst the servants of one's friends and relations, whilst to the children of one's acquaintance one gives ingots of silver or pieces of silver coin wrapped up in red paper, or coins threaded on red strings, which are called lucky coins. I may mention here, since I am speaking about children, a striking peculiarity, which is specially noticeable in the case of very young children; that is, that in China we

don't count people's ages by the number of their days, but from year to year. Thus a child born on the 31st of December is two years on the evening of the next day, that is, on January 1st of the following year.

The fourth day of the first moon is the Feast of the God of Wealth and of Happiness. All the drawing-rooms are then lighted up in honour of these divinities, which are represented either by images or by a simple piece of writing on paper.

The seventh day is consecrated to the Feast of Man, and the ninth to that of God, and so on; for the feasts almost daily follow in quick succession up to the end of the Feast of Lanterns.

During this time all that the people think about is to organise pleasures, and to give themselves up to enjoyment. Debts have all been paid off at the end of the old year, and the public and private holiday, which is general, gives all the liberty needed. The season of the year is not favourable to travelling, and so all that

remains for pastimes are the indoor games which are best adapted for killing time. There is a great deal of playing in China at the time of year under consideration. Games are played with cards, with dominoes, with dice, and with the twelve beasts. There is also a more instructive game, which represents the steps of official promotion. I need hardly say that music is not wanting at these fêtes.

Many families do not eat meat on New Year's Day. According to Lie-Tseu, this custom originated as follows:

"'The people of Han-Tang,' says this author, 'had offered a pigeon as a New Year's gift to a certain philosopher. He accepted the present, and giving wing to the bird, said, "All things should live happily on this day."'"

This is a pretty tale with a delicate sentiment. Superstition is not, however, wanting. With regard to the crackers which one might suppose are only let off for fun, or in invitation to noisy revelry, it appears that a good many people fancy that they serve to

frighten off evil spirits, who would never dare to knock at doors behind which such terrible explosions are taking place.

But there is more than this. Many people paint a charm on their doors, or draw a cock, or two guardians, which are thought to be capable of swallowing whole any demon who might take it into his head to show himself.

The astronomical works published under the dynasty of the Han family state that one can judge from the wind that is blowing at daybreak on New Year's Day what kind of weather one is going to have throughout the ensuing year. Thus a south wind means general dryness, a south-westerly wind partial drought, and so on. An easterly wind on New Year's Day morning means war, a north-westerly wind a good harvest, a north wind a moderate harvest. A north-easterly wind indicates a peaceful year, wind from the west warns one of coming floods, and from south-east of epidemics.

In the same way, the first word that one writes on New Year's Day gives its character to the whole year, good or bad. So, to make sure, people always begin their letters on that day with such words as, Happiness, Wealth, Felicity, Long-Life, and so on.

This manner of ensuring a happy New Year has inspired a woman philosopher with the four following lines:

> "Everybody to-day dips the brush into ink,
> To write the words Happiness, Wealth, Felicity.
> If I might give wise advice to the ambitious,
> It is to bear the life that is laid upon us, and not to ask for things which Providence cannot possibly accord to all."

I may add, that in spite of this excellent advice everybody continues to ask for what is unobtainable — the pauper for a little wealth, the rich man for more than he can have.

Fables which take something from superstition know how to mingle with it a certain amount of wisdom. I will give in proof the following story:—

"A poor man of letters, who had not the wherewithal to celebrate the change of the year, was fast asleep. In China, as elsewhere, it is true that he who sleeps dines. In the cottage where he lived there was neither fire, nor food, nor wine, nor light, nor pleasure in any form.

"Meanwhile his neighbours were celebrating the feast with joyous revelry; the feast that was so sad for the solitary man that we are speaking about.

"All of a sudden, at about midnight, somebody knocked at his door.

"'Who is there?' asked the man of letters, disagreeably wakened just at the moment when he was dreaming about victuals, drink, and luxurious apartments.

"'It's I, the God of Wealth.'

"'I am sorry to say that I cannot receive you.'

"'And why so?'

"'Because I have no luck.'

"In spite of the insisting of the God of Wealth, the poor man absolutely refused to open the door.

"A few moments later another knock was heard at the door.

"'Who are you?' cried the sleeper, again awakened from his dreams.

"'Tis I, the God of Luck.'

"The man of letters sprang out of bed, and received the visitor with open arms in the dark cabin. The excellent god then wrote something with the tip of his finger on the poor man's forehead and then disappeared.

"The cottager had hardly time to get back to bed when the God of Wealth again announced himself.

"This time, he was received in the most cordial manner, and at once placed in the poor man's hand treasures of great value. He then asked the poor man to tell him why, after having at first refused to receive him, he now gave him so cordial a reception.

"'Oh, it's simple enough. Now I have got luck, which I hadn't a short while ago. I knew that you always follow the God of Luck, and so it was him that I waited for.'"

It is evident that this means that without luck, fortune itself is worth nothing.

The God of Wealth, whose good works we have just related, is nowhere more fêted than in the town of Canton. Every evening, after the shops are closed, candles are lighted and incense is burned before his altars, which are fitted in niches on the outside of the shops. The whole town is illuminated and perfumed. This is an universal adoration to which no inhabitant of the Chinese empire gives himself up more fervently than the Cantonese, who are the most commercial of the Chinese. Now, the God of Wealth

is also the God of Commerce, and that is as it should be, for commerce is money after all; at least, money is the object of trade and of traders. Plutus is the complement of Mercury.

The spring equinox, which we call the beginning of spring, often falls on the first days of the new year. Then, there is a great fête.

A veritable procession is organised in each town. At the head come the prefects and sub-prefects, and all the members of their official staff in gala uniform. Each holds in his hand a spray of artificial flowers, representing the peony, the flower of the spring. They ride in their open sedan-chairs, escorted with music and soldiers. By their side are carried tablets, on which are written their titles and the services they have rendered.

This is the procession of the spring ox.

Behind the official procession is carried the gigantic statue of an ox, made of clay, which is plastered over with papers of many

colours. Each colour stands for some atmospheric change—fine weather, drought, change, and so on.

Behind this statue comes the real ox, all gay with ribbons and rosettes. A statuette is stuck up on its back, which represents the coming year. Its dress also portends the weather that is going to be prevalent throughout the coming year. If it has shoes on its feet, that means that the year will be a dry one; if it has clogs, that the year will be rainy. A clog on one foot and a shoe on the other, mean that the year will be a temperate one.

The whole procession makes its way towards the temple of the God of Agriculture, where the sacrifices take place. The ox is slaughtered and its flesh is distributed amongst the crowd.

Thus in the extreme East the "spring ox" is being led in procession at about the same time that the Parisians are leading round their Carnival "fat ox." The two ceremonies are evidently agricultural

feasts, such as formerly were celebrated in Egypt with the ox Apis. Man is the same everywhere; his customs, languages, and institutions are different, but those are only differences of form, the substance is everywhere the same.

CHAPTER VIII

THE END OF THE YEAR

THE holidays begin ten days before the end of the year, so that everybody may have time to prepare for this great solemnity. For in China there are no legal holidays, and busy people only get a rest during the three great feasts of the Dragon, the Moon, and the change of the Year. There are five days holiday during each of the first two feasts, and thirty days during the last.

It is on these dates that bills usually fall due, and when they must be paid.

The last feast that we have spoken about includes several religious ceremonies. These consist in offering banquets to each

one of the gods in thanksgiving for the good things he has accorded during the year that has passed. On the twenty-fourth day of the twelfth moon a touching ceremony is performed in the richest and the poorest houses alike. It is that of the adieu addressed to the household god and the reception given to the new-comer. It appears that this god only holds his tutelary office during one year, and has then to make place for a successor.

The altar of this god is always placed in the kitchen; candles are lighted before him every day, and incense is burned. At night a night-lamp, which is called the fire of long life, burns before his altar.

On the evening of the twenty-fourth, a grand dinner, with cakes of the most varied descriptions, and fruits of every sort, is spread out before this altar for the guests to partake of.

After having poured out the wine of libation and let off the crackers, without which no fête is complete in China, oats

and corn are thrown on the roof of the house for the horses of the god to feed upon, and it is at that moment that he is supposed to take his departure.

The table is then cleared, and a fresh repast is laid out before the altar for the refreshment and welcome of the new-comer. His name is at once inscribed in the place of that of his predecessor, or it is the images of himself and his wife that are placed in the stead of those of the gods of the previous year.

This is our Christmas Day, after a fashion. It is this day that the children look forward to, in the expectation of fruits and sweets.

Preserves are made of the dishes that are left over from these two repasts, and these sometimes last over the whole of the first month of the new year. The richer a family is, the more of these preserves will it make. Parties and fêtes follow each other in unbroken succession.

On the last day a large pot of rice is

put out of doors. The rice is garnished with cypress leaves, on which imitation ingots of gold and silver are placed. These are in paper, which is covered with lettering, meaning long life, honour, health, happiness, and so on, cut out in red paper. On the rice are heaped various kinds of fruit, symbolic of prosperity.

This rice remains standing on a table in the open air until midnight. It is called the "rice of the old year." At midnight it is replaced by another pot of rice, garnished in the same way. This is the rice of the new year, and it is allowed to stand in position for two or three days. A lucky day is then chosen in the calendar, and on this day the rice is removed and eaten.

It is unnecessary to say that the same sacrifices take place every day before the tablets of the ancestors, who are never or on any occasion forgotten.

Formerly a number of superstitious customs were observed. According to an

old handbook of hygiene, a man had to lie down secretly by the side of the family well on the New Year's Eve, holding in his hand a flowering branch of the pepper tree, and, when midnight struck, to throw this branch into the well, if the family wanted to have pure and microbeless water to drink during the ensuing year.

Under the reign of the dynasty of the Han family, a procession of one hundred and twenty children, aged from ten to twelve years, and dressed in grey clothes with red hats, used to march through the streets, each child being armed with a drum, with the beating of which he was supposed to drive away all evil spirits.

This procession was much more imposing under the Shungs in the sixth century. The military took part in it, dressed in bright uniforms, and carrying gilt lances and the banners of the dragon. These marched at the head of the procession, all more or less hideously masked. Meanwhile, out in the country the farmers used

to form a torchlight procession, with torches stuck in the end of long bamboos, and went running through all their fields, begging the gods for a good rice-harvest and an abundance of silkworms. In some provinces children used to run about the streets, saying that they had their stock of intelligence for sale, and, of course, found none to buy of them. All these things have now been done away with. Only the religious ceremonies, of which I have spoken above, remain in force today, as well as the vigils for seeing the new year in. I do not speak of certain eccentric customs, which only form exceptions to the general habit. Thus, for instance, the poets will sometimes place their works on an altar in their house and make sacrifices before them. Others melt their gold and pour it into water, predicting the future from the curious shapes of the metal as it cools.

There is a literary piece by Han-Wong-Koung, an adieu to the God of Wretched-

ness, which is very much read in China during the feast of the end of the year. It is too long to be quoted here, but can be read by all with great satisfaction. It gives excellent advice to the poor, and teaches them how to fight against the demon of poverty. Some read it to learn how to remain happy, others how to console themselves for their wretchedness and how to get out of it.

CHAPTER IX

PROCESSIONS

IN China the Taoists alone have religious processions, which is logical enough, as it is their custom to represent their gods in human figures. To mention only the principal ceremonies, I may allude to the procession of the god Tai-Tchang, of the god Tcheng-Houang, of the gods of epidemic diseases, and the goddesses who protect women in labour and little children.

Tai-Tchang is the god of the mountain of the same name, a function which he combines with that of seventh high judge in Hades, which has ten such judges.

The processions of Tai-Tchang take

place during the third moon. The terrible figure is brought on the appointed day, surrounded by an imperial pomp. He deserves all these splendours, seeing that his title is that of sovereign of the mountain.

He is preceded by his colleagues, the other grand judges, his sons and god-children, who are all reputed princes of his family. Each of these divinities has its special escort, with two large lanterns and a number of tablets, on which are inscribed the various titles of the god.

Next come the orchestra and the followers, all dressed in gala clothes. Some carry a vase full of flowers, others a smoking incense-bowl.

Besides these, the procession is followed by numbers of private individuals, carrying in their hands reduced models of the various instruments of torture—handcuffs, chains, hooks, &c. They hope by this means to draw down on their devoted heads the punishments which the god may be intending to inflict on those dear to them.

At Fou-Tcheou young girls also take part in this manifestation, but in the other cities women are forbidden to do so.

The procession takes its way to a vast building situated on the outskirts of the town, which is called the Prison of the Ghosts. There is such a prison near every city. The object of this visit is to release from their captivity the spiritual captives, so that during the Feast of the Dead they may be able to take part in their family celebrations, and perform the sacrifices which are expected of children to their ancestors.

The same procession is repeated on a smaller scale a few days later. This time its object is to bring back to their prison the ghost who had been temporarily released.

All along the way down which the procession passes, the faithful place before the door of their houses tables on which lighted candles and incense are burning, with flowers and fruits. Everybody comes out of the house to admire the immense

march past, which is, moreover, a kind of walking exhibition, as the members of the different societies which take part in it, and which all belong to different trades, carry with them all the new productions of the year. The crowd covers at least from two to four kilomètres with its long moving column; for each god has his subalterns, and each of these subalterns has the right to a magnificent escort. Toy and sweet merchants profit by the occasion to display their wares in the streets, offering their goods to the children, who always take a very large share in festivities of this sort.

At Fou-Tcheou there is a peculiarity which is particularly interesting. The feast lasts two days, and the second day's ceremony is an exact repetition of the first. However, on the second day an excursion is made out to the suburbs of the town, where Tai-Tchang's mother-in-law is supposed to live, the god being brought as a respectful son-in-law to pay his respects

to the good lady. Happy god, happy mother-in-law!

Legend relates that a young peasant-girl, daughter of a butcher, having witnessed the procession, went home and died immediately. During her short agony she told her parents that the god, only recently having become a widower, had noticed her great beauty, and had chosen her for his wife. She was an only daughter. Her death threw her family into despair, and in their rage her parents set out to revenge themselves on the god by setting fire to his temple. Tai-Tchang, however, taking human shape, appeared to them, and pacified them by saying that he had married their daughter, and that he owed her parents all the respect due from a good son-in-law. As a proof of this, he gave orders that a procession should take him every year to the house where the butcher's wife, the mother of his divine companion and queen, lived. This shows that Tai-Tchang was a very

sensible god, free from all aristocratic prejudices, and the very type of the cunning son-in-law, diplomatic enough to be able to soften down the anger of a mother-in-law, who in her rage had nearly become an incendiary.

In the summer, similar processions take place in honour of the gods of the epidemical diseases. We enjoy in China the sad privilege of owning five epidemics, which are local and indigenous. The figures of these gods, which never vary in appearance, can be seen in every street, and in every quarter there is a temple consecrated to these terrible divinities. The processions in their honour are, in consequence, daily occurrences, as each part of the town performs this ceremony in turn.

Although the procession is less imposing than the one that follows Tai-Tchang, it is nevertheless of great richness in the larger quarters. At the head come the five gods, each preceded by his subalterns. Behind them is carried an immense paper-boat, very skilfully made. It is

mounted by the same gods, also in paper, who are placed in the cabin in the centre, whilst in another cabin are shut up paper-images of all the other demons. A man walks at the side of this boat, carrying on his shoulder, by means of a water-carrier's pole, two buckets filled with débris of meats and offal of all kinds that are known to engender disease. These buckets are called ironically the buckets of happiness. The procession goes straight to the sea-shore, or to the banks of the river. Once there, the buckets are flung into the water, and the ship and its passengers are set fire to and burnt. The epidemics are then supposed to have been driven right out of the town. Mutual congratulation and a banquet terminate the fête. This is doubtless doubly symbolical. The buckets represent hygienic measures, the boat and its gods and demons figure the expulsion of all diseases, carried away by the river or destroyed by the fire.

Tcheng-Houang is the god of the pro-

vinces. His image may be seen everywhere, just as in Paris we see on the Place de la Concorde the statues of the chief citizens of France. The difference is that Tcheng-Houang is a real personage, not merely a personification. His ceremony is about identical with that of Tai-Tchang, except for the fact that Tchang-Houang has only right to the title of Governor.

The procession of the goddesses who protect women in labour and children usually takes place at the beginning of the year. The chair on which the statue is seated is all covered over with flowers, and as it is carried round by its bearers all the childless women of the town come crowding round imploring the divinity to give them children. The women take from the chair the first flower that comes into their fingers. If it is a red flower, they may hope to have a daughter; if it is a white flower, that means that they will have a boy. At the same time, the would-be mothers make vows to present the goddess

with tapestry or clothes, or some decorative object, should she hear their prayer.

Rich people often invite the goddess into their houses as she passes their doors. Fireworks are then let off, and flowers are added to those on the chair. Then tea and cakes are handed round to the members of the procession, and after this the Chinese Lucina is allowed to resume her peregrinations, to visit other houses if she be so disposed. Throughout the month women crowd into the sanctuary of the goddess in an unceasing stream, some to fulfil their vows and bring their votive offerings, and others to implore, in their turns, the intervention of the Chinese Genitrix goddess.

CHAPTER X

A BUDDHIST SOLEMNITY

IT is on the eighth day of the fourth moon—which corresponds to the month of May of the Gregorian calendar—that the great ceremony of the ordination of the Buddhist priests, also called the Feast of the Bath of Buddha, is performed.

On the eve of this day all the candidates gather together in the monastery in each town to prepare themselves for the solemnity of the morrow. At about eight o'clock in the evening a bell is rung. The priests are in their places, each on his knees before the statue of Buddha. First a prayer is recited, and then hymns are sung. After

this the chief priest takes down off its lofty pedestal a little idol—a statuette of Buddha, places it on a platter of gold or of carved silver, and pours over it water out of another platter. During this bath, which lasts for half-an-hour, the priests are in adoration, and all the musical instruments are heard. Then comes a rather lengthy pause. At midnight the ceremony of consecration begins. The candidates who, either by vocation or by sudden impulse, have chosen this career, have to live two or three years in one of the monasteries, and after this, before being qualified to exercise the function of minister, must submit themselves to a somewhat painful formality.

The great hall of Buddha is brilliantly lighted up. On tables placed side by side are set out the images of the different Buddhist apostles, and all kinds of religious emblems. Before each of these statues there is placed a kind of *prie-dieu* stool, to which the name of one of the candidates is attached, and it is on this stool that, after

a long hour of meditation, the candidate kneels down. His head is shaven completely bald, and on the naked skin are placed three pieces of tinder soaked in incense, to which the chief sets light. The candidate continues praying quietly whilst the conical-shaped tinder candles on his head burn out, burning away the skin of his head withal. This is the reason why one always sees cicatrices on the heads of the Buddhist priests. Some have three, some six, some nine, some even more, according to the degree of their devotion.

On the morrow another ceremony takes place, that of the reception of the priests. The old give welcome to the new.

I relate all this because this sight is one in which in China a great deal of interest is taken. It is considered quite a pleasure to be able to witness it.

When I was a boy of nine years, the chief of the Buddhists who was to officiate at the ordination that year being a friend of my

father's, I asked to be allowed to be present at the ceremony.

It was a beautiful afternoon. After crossing fields bordered with high trees, and where the cry of the crickets could be heard on every side, we entered into a wood, in the centre of which stood the monastery. We were well received by the priests, who told me that no child of my age had ever been present at the feast. The scene that I was to see was one which might turn me either into a fanatical Buddhist, or a bitter enemy of that religion. However, my father insisted, and I was allowed to enter. We first of all partook of a dinner without meat, consisting of bamboo sprouts, salt vegetables, and a purée of beans, all of which seemed delicious to me. We were afterwards allowed to be present at the great dinner of the priests. Their immense dining-room resembled very much that of a barracks, with this difference, however, that during the meal the strictest silence was observed. This silence was

only broken by the prayers that were sung before and after each course. I was very surprised to see how healthy these monks looked in spite of their bad food. I have since learnt, however, that a vegetable diet is quite as nourishing as meat, and now understand what at the time puzzled me. On leaving the dining-room I took a turn in the passage of meditation. Each priest was seated with his legs crossed under him, his eyes closed, and his hands locked together, on a bed placed in an alcove, which was separated by screens on either sides from those of his neighbours. The priests seemed to be lost in the most profound meditation. Child that I was, and not knowing what importance they attached to their silence, I tried to get the monks to speak to me, in spite of my father's forbidding me to speak to them. But not one of them gave me any answer, not one of them moved a hair. Some time was spent in this way, after which we betook ourselves to the great hall of consecration, where the

ordination ceremony, as described above, took place.

The net result of my excursion was that I passed a very unpleasant night, and that I have still before my eyes the horrible sight of hundreds of Buddhists in their grey robes, with their bald heads flaming hideously.

As soon as ever day broke I begged my father to take me away from this sinister spot, and in spite of the heavy dew that lay on the grass, and the chilliness of the spring morning, we set out at once. As we reached a little pathway which separated two fields, I just escaped treading on two snakes, who were wriggling in battle together, and who passed from one field into another between my very legs.

The impression that I carried away was so deplorable a one that, but for an incident which, happening some days later, showed me that their fanaticism was far from being so absolute as I had imagined, I should never have felt anything but aversion to

these fanatical madmen, as I then considered them. One day, some time after our visit to the monastery, one of the priests whom we had met there paid us a visit at our house, and stayed to dinner. I cannot express the stupefaction I felt in seeing him partake of the dishes of meat that were served, with the greatest relish and appetite. I could not understand. I knew that the Buddhists were strict vegetarians, and that they forbid the use not only of flesh and fish, but even of eggs, fat, milk, and butter. I could not help expressing my astonishment, child that I was. The priest merely smiled, and said, "Buddha is such a kindly god, my child, that he pays no attention to these minor details."

Buddha, indeed, is the god of gladness. I need only look at his face to be convinced of that fact. This face, with the fat cheeks, lighted up with an eternal smile; this well-fed body, comfortably seated on the lotus-flower, that flower that the god holds in his hand; that quiet attitude of

happy *bon vivant*—all these things made one think rather of some fat monk from Rabelais than of an ascetic emaciated with prayer and self-inflicted punishment.

The Buddhist story relates, moreover, that the first Buddha was a man of kindly feelings towards his fellows, whose only mission it was to save all mortals from their wretchedness, and to make them enter the "western heaven," which is that of pleasure.

The other day my friend Cernuschi gave a children's ball in Paris. There was a large Buddha in the drawing-room. I happened to be present; and when I was asked whether I was not horrified at seeing such frivolities taking place before the statue of a god, I answered in the negative. "Ah," they cried, "you are more tolerant than we are. Our priests would never permit us to dance before a crucifix."

"That is quite different," I answered. "Christ was a martyr, and it would certainly be wrong to indulge in frivolous gaieties

before His image. Buddha, on the other hand, has only one desire, and that is, that each and all should be happy. Besides, this excellent god is on a holiday in Europe, and that is all the more reason why he should be glad to see people amusing themselves, since he is here for amusement."

CHAPTER XI

RUSTIC PLEASURES

WALKS AND PILGRIMAGES

THE districts in China most favoured by nature are, without doubt, Hang-Tcheou and Sou-Tcheou. The first possesses the lake of Sou-Hou, rich in beautiful surroundings. The river Tchinn-Houai flows through the second.

A very popular Chinese proverb says :

"Heaven is what is most beautiful in the skies, on earth it is Sou and Hang."

In the evening the lake and the river are covered with illuminated pleasure boats. Songs and laughter echo on every side.

The banks are covered with villas glittering with light, where happy faces and charming features may be seen.

These villas are inhabited by the most beautiful women, who come to this wonderful land to admire the beautiful scenery, and to be admired in their turn. It has been said—such is the reputation of this enchanting spot—that at Hang-Tcheou the moon, instead of being sad at times, is always very happy, as if to share in the general gladness. What songs of love has she not inspired, what poems, what music, born of the contemplation of her orb, more beautiful here than anywhere else. I will add that the prettiest women in China are born in these two provinces.

Sou-Tcheou has, besides its river, a lake called Tai-Hou, in which are a number of mountainous islands. The most celebrated of these are the Toung-Ting-Chan group, which are much loftier than the others. In autumn, when the Virginia creepers have turned to red amidst the green of the pine-

trees and the bamboo, the aspect is a most picturesque one.

To the west of the town there is a mountain known as the "Magic Rock," where there is the grotto of Si-Si, the favourite of Prince Ou-Ouang of Sou-Tcheou, the most beautiful woman in China, and quite close to it are the Lake of Flowers, the Pathways of Pleasant Odours, and the King's Peak. From the top of this peak, a view of the Toung-Ting mountain, rising a mass of green out of the snow-white lake, may be obtained.

There is another mountain to the north-east, called Fou-Kiou, or the Tomb of the Panther. The story is, that when Emperor Tchin-Sse-Houang wanted to break into the tomb of Prince Ou-Ouang, a tiger appeared on the tomb and protected it, whence its name. Lower down is a tomb which has been preserved for over eight centuries, and which contains the body of a young woman renowned for her misfortunes in love. The few poems of hers that have survived are so very sad, that all persons of a romantic

turn of mind who have read them never fail to pay a visit to her tomb, and to cover it with flowers.

Here is a short poem written by this heart-broken woman :

"I prostrate myself before the Buddhist Virgin,
so full of pity and of charity,
To beg her to grant that in my future life I
may neither revisit earth nor tarry in
Paradise;
I pray that she may bless me with a drop of
dew at the end of her willow branch,
So that I may become a double lotus blossom."

The third line contains an allusion to the Buddhist ceremony of aspersion. The double lotus-flower is supposed to bear on the same stalk a male and a female blossom. It is the emblem of the union of two hearts and of happy loves.

The marble of the tomb is covered with inscriptions made by the visitors. Most of these are in verse, of the same metre and with the same rhymes used by the dead poetess.

Some way off is another mountain, where

Lao-Tse spent a long time in meditation. In the centre of this mountain is a large lake, known as the "Celestial Lake," where, in summer, lotuses of extraordinary size may be seen in flower. It used to be said that by eating these flowers one attained immortality.

All this district is full of celebrated places and of historical sites. Generally speaking, there is a monastery on the top of each of the mountains. In the middle of the spring all the ladies of the district make offerings to Buddha.

Those who admire pretty women take advantage of this custom to come and stare at the ladies.

The monastery is reached in sedan-chairs. The ladies go down again backwards. I never could understand the reason of this strange custom until chance brought under my notice these two lines, written in the seventeenth century by a woman :

"I go down stepping backwards, and you follow me face to face,
So that it is not necessary for me to turn my head round at each step."

There are even more celebrated places at Hang-Tcheou. In the first place, there is Si-Hou, mentioned above. An avenue of weeping willows surrounds the whole lake, and the branches of the trees droop down into the water. Behind is an immense panorama of mountains—the Phœnix Mountain, the Mountains of the Screen of Stone, the Solitary Mountain, and the Mountain of the Pumpkin, which was the favourite walk of Emperor Tchin-Sse-Houang. This destroyer of books used often to land at the foot of this mountain, leaving his boat on the lake while he made his excursion. Then there are the Mountain of Music, against which the current breaks and is driven back with terrible noise; the Mountain of the White Dragon, the Mountain of Sans-Souci, where may still be found the utensils in which the immortals, according to the legend, used to prepare their magic remedies in the old days. I may also name the Celestial Pillar, the Fist, the Eye of Heaven, and the Marble Mirror, which is formed

of a huge round rock so smooth and polished, that one can see his reflection in it as in a mirror. Emperor Tchiao-Tchung, of the Thang family, used often to give dinners on this marble table. The guests used to spread their cloaks out on the rocks which stand around, and on this account the Emperor called these rocks Marechal-I-King, which means the embroidered garment. The following story is told about the Flying Mountain: "An Indian priest, seeing it for the first time, appeared quite dumfounded with astonishment. He was asked what was the matter. 'This mountain,' he answered, 'belongs to my country. I do not know when it can have flown here.'"

Beyond the summit of the Ten Thousand Pine Trees, we see the Mountain of the Red Twilight, so called because in the spring the peach-trees, with which it is covered, blossom with their pink flowers, and give this mountain the appearance of being bathed in the ruddy glow of dawn or twilight.

In this district there are a number of

little lakes and merry rivulets, which have poetic names. A part of the shore of Si-Hou is called the Quay of Master Sou, because Sou-Toung-Po had nenuphars and other flowers planted there. Many poets have written about this lake. The most celebrated is the following, which was written by Sou-Toung-Po:

"Compare the lake to Si-Si.
It is more simple and prettier, because it is less made up."

A more modern author says:

"The traveller finds himself in the middle of a picture, and can easily believe that all these picturesque constructions are made of embroidery, so I am no longer surprised that the Choung dynasty
Preferred this lake to the half of their empire."

The following is still more enthusiastic:

"Ten leagues of lotuses and an autumn rich in koue flowers
Attract the sovereign to them.
The new melody, entitled, 'Song of the Willows,'
Is sung by every mouth.

This is what has changed the capital of the empire,
And has caused Pien-Theou to be deserted for Hang-Tcheou."

Another poem, the last, says:

"The perfumed zephyr embalms the light of the moon,
Athwart the twelve stories of the mountain;
The Court ascends in the night to the Pavilion of Leisure,
Enjoying the panorama from above,
Which offers a charming view at the moment when all the houses are lighting up."

This will suffice to give an idea of these landscapes, the most beautiful in China. The views are of infinite variety, and each point has some natural charm, or has attaching to it some memorable event, historical or legendary. So it is very difficult to represent all there is to be described here, even with the paint-brush. Man is unable to portray all the beauties which Nature, the real artist, so prodigiously displays.

CHAPTER XII

BATHING

THERE was a tropical heat that day, not a breath of wind stirring, and not a shady corner to be found anywhere. It was one of those stifling and suffocating days of our Chinese summer. I was trying to find some place where to spend the afternoon with some degree of comfort, when some one knocked at my door.

They were friends of mine, who had come to ask me to go bathing with them. They had been considerate enough to bring a sedan-chair for my use with them, and so off we went.

Beyond the N.E. gate of Fou-Tcheou

there is a warm sulphurous spring, which is very much frequented by the inhabitants of the town. Some go and bathe in the common pool, which is reserved for the cure of diseases of the skin; others, who come either for cleanliness or merely for pleasure, take private cabins. I need not say that there are separate pools for the two sexes.

There is nothing picturesque about the bathing pools, and so I will not describe them; but I should like to say a few words about the inner arrangements, which have nothing in common with those in similar establishments in Europe or Turkey.

The house is always built in the middle of lofty trees, and its foundations are sunk, wherever possible, in a running stream. The building, which is one or, at most, two storeys in height, is reached through a vast peristyle. The shape of the house is either round or square, either all in glass, or else abundantly lighted with windows made of silk, or of transparent paper, in carved wood frames. Against the windows

on the front are placed little tables, spaced out like those in a restaurant. The cabins are behind. As soon as the bathers arrive they are received by the employés, and, when they have taken their seats, tea and pipes of tobacco are served. At the same time each bather receives some water-melon seeds to help him to while away the time whilst he is waiting for his bath. Then the water-carriers begin to busy themselves, carrying smoking pails of hot water, which they have just drawn from the spring.

There is a round bath in each cabin, and across it is laid a plank, on which the bather sits without plunging his body into the water. He is provided with a large sponge, and uses it to sponge himself all over with the hot water in the bath. As soon as the bath is finished the bather dresses and returns to his table, where a lunch is served, composed of light and exquisite dishes. Here the bathers drink wine, laugh, and talk, or play at the game which resembles the Italian game of "morra," where you

have to guess the number of fingers which are held up by the players. The loser has to drink. Fortunately the cups are very small, or it wouldn't be possible to lose very often. After dinner, card games are played, or chess, or dominoes. An orchestra attached to the establishment plays its sweetest melodies.

Thus the rest of the afternoon is spent in the fresh air, under the shadow of the high trees, with their thick leaves. It is, as you see, a kind of hydropathic casino. As soon as the sun has set, and before the moon is too bright, a move homewards is made across the fields in the sedan-chairs.

In the north the baths are inside the towns, and thus are not so well situated as where they are in the country. The arrangements are, however, almost the same as those I have described, except that incense is burned in each cabin, and in such quantities, that as you enter the thick smoke gets into your eyes and makes them smart and water. The reader will notice that I

only speak about warm baths. I must explain that the Chinese do not like cold baths, which they consider to be very bad for the health. It is only the children of people living by the river-sides who take cold baths. Cold water is so generally disliked in China, that lukewarm water is almost always used for washing. We won't even drink cold water, and that is one of the reasons why tea is so largely used at home, the infusion giving us an excuse for drinking hot water.

CHAPTER XIII

KITE FLYING

KITE-FLYING, which since the earliest ages has been popular in China, is, without possible contradiction, the game which best exercises the bodies of children. The boy runs back, comes, goes, pulls at the string, winds it up, inhales the fresh air with all his lung-power, and develops his strength and his skill at one and the same time.

In Northern and Central China it is in the spring that this pastime is indulged in; in the south it is in the autumn. Our kites, as a rule, are much larger than those used in Europe, and we designate their sizes by the number of pieces of paper

that have been used in their manufacture. Thus we speak of "two-paper," "three-paper," and "thirty-two-paper" kites. The last are very much taller than a man.

The form varies very much. Our "paper eagles," as we call them, are made in every conceivable shape—butterflies, beetles, birds of the most varied sizes and species, monstrous dragons, are all in turn modelled in the manufacture of these charming toys.

The strings vary, according to the size of the kite, in thickness from the finest thread to cord often several millimètres thick. In the season, the sky is clouded with these artificial birds, casting fantastic shadows as they float in the ethereal blue.

It is said that, one day, a player having to absent himself for a moment, tied the string of his kite to the cradle in which his child was sleeping. When he came back he found that his kite had got away, carrying the cradle and the child with it. Neither were ever seen or heard of again.

The very large kites do not always carry children away, but, on the other hand, they often are very quarrelsome beings. The kites which are intended for the purpose of aerial warfare can be recognised by the colour of the paper that they are made of. One can thus see at once what is the character—pacific or bellicose—of each new comer. Often, the two possessors of the fighting kites cannot see each other, but only the two kites they are fighting with. Each child tries by skilful manœuvring of the string to get his kite behind that of his adversary, and hook it on to the other. When he has done this, he draws his string in, and, if he is the stronger, is able to bring both kites down to the ground, cuts the string of the enemy's kite, patches up its wounds, and adds it to his collection. Other kites are more peaceful, devoted as they are to music—the civilising art. A bow, crossed by several parallel chords, is fastened to the three strings which cross the face of the flying-machine, and the

wind, playing through these cords, causes them to vibrate, giving the music of the Æolian harp. Some children get to be very skilful at this game, and it is really an interesting sight to see them vieing in force and ruse with each other to obtain these never bloody victories.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ILLUMINATED BOATS

OUR forefathers used to say that to find pleasure it must be sought for either on the mountains or on the water, and it is quite true that if you want to enjoy fine weather, you must look out for some place where the views are varied. But, as Mahomet very wisely remarked, the mountains won't come to us, and we must go to the mountains. It must also be remarked that there are many flat districts in China where there are no mountains to be found, whilst water can be found everywhere; besides, mountain-climbing is fatiguing, whilst excursions on the water in flower-decked canoes, comfort-

ably fitted, afford both repose and pleasure, cradled as one is by the rhythmic cadence of the oars. When the wind is strong enough to allow of a sail being hoisted, you feel almost as light as a bird flying in space; and let the illusion last ever so short a time, you fancy you have been transformed into a member of the aerial world of genii, pursuing in cloudland a life of eternal happiness.

My countrymen have in all ages taken special pleasure in excursions on the water. Under the dynasty of the Sungs—that is, in the twelfth century—Lake Loi was very much frequented. The shores were planted all round with weeping willows, and the moon seemed to lose seven-tenths of her brightness under the gleam of the numberless illuminated boats sailing along to the sound of joyous music.

A poet has said:

> "By moonlight on the twenty-four bridges,
> The sweet melody may everywhere be heard,
> the melody of flutes, sonorous at the lips
> of charming women."

The river Tchiang-Hang became the favourite excursion under the reign of the Thangs. At the beginning of the spring people used to go out to it to collect aquatic flowers. This is expressed in these lines:

> "On the third day of the third moon—the birth of spring—the banks of the river Tchiang-Hang are lined with pretty women."

When Sung came to the throne, he used to make his excursions chiefly on Lake Si-Hou, the beautiful lake in the west, which we have already described. The skiffs flew like fly-shuttles across the loom, cutting through the light mist that rose from the water; and blue flags were to be seen on every tree. The lake used at that time to be called the Crucible for Melting Gold, a metaphor which is not without point.

Three centuries ago, under the reign of the Mings, the river Tching-Houai began to grow fashionable, and as the moon rose with the tide, thousands of boats, covering more than ten lis (Chinese miles), could be seen hieing hither, with their pearly blinds

casting shadows which trembled on the trouble of the waters. All that has disappeared to-day. One must have been in these boats to understand the real pleasure of a taskless and careless life. They are like floating houses, furnished with the most refined luxury. Each boat is rowed by six oarsmen, and is fitted in the centre with a deck-house, which is divided off into several drawing-rooms. Nothing more artistically and comfortably arranged can be found even in the wealthiest houses in Europe. In the evening, bright lights shine through the window-panes of all the cabins, and it is as if the water were furrowed up with thousands of meteors shedding their joyful brightness far and wide. No; there is no better mode of locomotion. On the water there is no dust; you do not run, you skim along, and the slow progress of the skiff gives you time to enjoy the varied aspects of the country, studded as it is with clusters of sombre and silent trees. Then all that a carriage can do for you is to convey you; you can't settle

down in a carriage. These boats, on the other hand, are so many houses, where whole families or large parties can meet together and dwell. To conclude, the boat alone deprives the landscape of its immobility, animates it, and gives it movement and life; it renders Nature herself more gay and more poetical

CHAPTER XV

GARDENING

A RATHER curious coincidence exists in the two antipodes of the globe. In France, when a man retires from business or from official life, he says, "I am going to plant cabbages." In China we say, "I am going to retire into the mountains, or into the forest." This is another way of saying that he is going to give himself up to gardening. This coincidence is caused by the fact that the same tastes exist everywhere. When a man has had enough of the occupations of an active life, he is glad to withdraw completely from them, and to devote himself to innocent pleasure, which provides exercise

for the body and rest for the mind, and charms with peace the last days of his life. What is called the world differs but little. When one is tired of its battles, it is that other world, the world of nature, that alone one yearns after.

In our history, as in our poetry, we are constantly reading of men of the widest fame who only lived in the hope of being able to retire at last. They often used to be heard saying that their gardens were running to waste for want of cultivation; and this thought is so popular a one, that even those who cling to their offices follow the example of the others, and constantly repeat that they are dying with the longing to go and cultivate their gardens. A philosopher thus characterises this contradiction between the word and the act:

> "Everybody expresses the desire to retire,
> But in the middle of the forest I never meet anybody."

However this may be, it is certain that a number of people do caress this dream

of a rural life, and do finally put it into execution.

"O rus quando te aspiciam," is true in every age, and in every land; on the banks of the blue river, as well as in the severe landscapes of ancient Rome, or on the sunny landscapes of modern France.

The poet Tou-Fou himself, when his functions at Court allowed him a few moments of leisure, took great delight in donning gardener's clothes, as is shown by the following lines:

"I met Tou-Fou at the foot of the Fan-Kou mountain, wearing a straw hat in the full heat of the sun.

'Why are you so thin?' I asked him.

'Because,' he answered, 'I have been making too many verses of late.'"

Tao-Yen-Ming, the man of letters, is the author of a long piece, entitled "Back in the Country," of which the following is the principal passage:

"My garden was just beginning to run wild,
But happily there still remain pines and chrysanthemums.

Having cultivated myself I return home,
Where my young boy jumps into my lap,
And a vase of wine awaits me on the table."

And this man of letters, in spite of repeated invitations from the Emperor, contented himself with living and dying in the midst of his chrysanthemums, which he loved passionately.

We are not, however, satisfied in China with mere cultivation, but have succeeded in developing our gardening operations into a real work of art. What with watering, grafting, the selection and scientific combinations of species, the great varieties both of our plants and our skill in shaping them into the most varied and most fantastic shapes, our gardens are veritable masterpieces of the art. The Chinese gardeners know how to transform their gardens into zoological gardens, cutting and bending their trees, as they do, into lions, dragons, and every other kind of animal. We are so fond of flowers, that a single spray is considered sufficient for a bouquet. One never

sees those round bouquets of several kinds of flowers, which are fashionable in Europe, at home.

Listen to the following verses written by an amateur gardener:

"What an admirable sight is this sunset,
Which like Bengal fire shows everything 'en rose.'
The flowers seem much prettier,
And the birds hop about, chirping on the branches of the bamboo.
The wind has calmed down, the trees are wrapped in silence,
And shades are stealthily creeping over all the land.
My breast swells, but as much with fresh air as with gladness.
But, alas, the day, approaching its end, holds no further prospect of happiness."

Do not think that to be happy the Chinaman must have a large estate. It is the quality of the philosopher to be satisfied with very little. A small plot of land is all-sufficient for his happiness, provided he has a few square yards of soil in which to plant his bamboo and his favourite flowers.

The following is a poem written by a man of letters, who lived in a cottage, and consoled himself in this wise:

"There is no reason why the mountain should be lofty;
It is celebrated by the genius who inhabits it.
Water need not be deep, if it is inhabited by a dragon.
My home is only a cottage, sheltering my virtue and my person.
Moss covers the steps; and the green of the lawn
Is reflected through my window-blinds;
But only men of letters come to laugh and to talk with me.
No vulgar man ever sets his foot here.
We can have nice games of skill.
We can read nice Buddhist books.
No sound of music troubles my ears.
No political element absorbs our minds.
I compare my cottage to the celebrated cottage of Nan-Yang,
Or to the historical pavilion of Si-Seu."

Moreover, has not Confucius written as follows?—

"There is no misery where there is no complaint."

I pause here to tell an anecdote:

"A foreign diplomat told me one day, whilst we were sitting chatting and smoking cigarettes in his study, that under the reign of Frederick the Great a Chinese dignitary came to Berlin. He was well received at Court, and introduced forthwith to a professor, who enjoyed a great reputation in the German capital for his translations of Chinese literature and his lessons in the Chinese language.

"The mission of this Chinese dignitary lasted several years, at the end of which time a real professor arrived from abroad. He was at once brought into the presence of the Chinese professor.

"Imagine his stupefaction when he discovered that this individual was not a professor at all, and that his real profession was that of a gardener. He had been forced to play the rôle of professor against his will. He was taken to be a savant, and a savant he had to be. On his arrival in Germany he had been at once considered a man of letters on the strength of his appearance only, without having to give any proof of his capacities, or to pass any examination. Not to injure this victim of a mistake, and to take advantage of his talents, he was appointed gardener at Sans-Souci, where, as it happens, I noticed several specimens of Chinese gardening operations."

I cannot vouch for the truth of the preceding anecdote, but, true or false, the

story is amusing enough to be related. After all, the man only had to change the course of his studies, and from being a professor of Chinese, developed into a professor of Chinese gardening.

A man of letters, named Ko-To-Tao (To-Tao means the humpback, a soubriquet given to the man whose real name nobody knew, and who seemed to enjoy his nickname), used to dwell in the village Foun-Lo (fertility and joy), which lies to the west of Tchiang-Nyang. He used to cultivate trees, which were so beautiful that they were the envy of all the rich people of the province, and all the traders bought from him. All the incomparable plants which came from his garden flourished and grew much quicker than any others. Some one asked him what was the secret of his success. He answered that there was no secret in the matter. All that he did was merely to study the individual character of the plant, and to treat it accordingly.

"When you plant a tree," he said, "you

must make it comfortable, give it plenty of room to grow in, and see that the soil in which it is planted is rich and solid. Then you must leave it alone, not move it about. From time to time, treat it with the care that you would show to your own child. Don't spoil it, when it is in want of nothing. Thus brought up the tree is free, and thrives, as it is its nature to do. I do not prevent its development, which comes of its own accord. Others who plant trees often change the earth round it, making it sometimes too strong, sometimes too poor, and spoil their pupils by too much care. Not satisfied with looking at them, they touch them; sometimes even they cut into the bark to see if they are living or dead. No sooner have the buds sprouted, than they examine them to see if they will turn into fruit. The tree is not free, and its character changes. You think that you are showing love, but you are destroying. You are trying to show care, and you are dealing

death. That is why my system is superior to all others. But in all that I have no particular merit."

He was asked if the same system could be applied in government offices.

"No; I know nothing about anything but trees. It is not my trade to govern nations. I have seen good governments, who, instead of leaving people free to work, took them under their protection. Then each day brought with it its sheaf of decrees and laws, ordering people into the fields and to their trades, and regulating their customs and ways of living. The people, being no longer master of itself or of its movements, comes to no good. As for myself, I am old and infirm, and occupy myself with my trees alone."

The person who had been talking with him, delighted to have learned the true system of government, whilst endeavouring to learn how to plant trees, wrote down the conversation for the instruction of the government officials.

After all, there is little difference between the education of a tree and of a man. Our forefathers used to say that it takes a century to complete the education of a man, and that the proper education of a tree lasts at least ten years.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CHASE

ACCORDING to the Book of Rites, the Emperor and the Royal Princes had to go to the chase whenever politics allowed them any leisure. As for the people, the chase was a military exercise, which they took after harvest-time. The book of verses mentions stalking in carriages. Emperor Chuang-Ouong, after having reconquered the territory, used to hunt in his carriage with his feudal princes, so as to see which of them were likely to become the bravest soldiers. Holidays were selected for hunting excursions. There was also at that time a special government department, whose duty it was to see to

the preservation and propagation of certain kinds of animals.

In the winter it was the wolves that were hunted, in the summer the deer, in the spring all other kinds of animals. Birds were hunted in the autumn. Bows and arrows were used, and the sportsmen had reached to such a degree of skill in archery, that they could transfix a leaf at the top of a tree. A celebrated hunter, named Kia-Kieng, only shot with a bow, which was so strong and tough that it needed a force of three hundredweight to stretch the string. One day he was asked to shoot at a buffalo at a distance of one hundred paces. His first arrow grazed the animal's back, tearing away a few hairs; the second grazed its belly. The archer was told that that was not good shooting. He said that it was just his superiority that he knew how not to pierce the animal. "But if you like," he said, "I will do so." His third arrow killed the buffalo.

With every shooting-party were taken

an eagle and dogs, the latter wearing golden bells round their necks. At an official chase the Minister of War himself stood up on a high platform, and a large standard was displayed at his back. The hunters, who were always accompanied with a noisy orchestra, and standard-bearers carrying flags of every colour, pursued the quarry, as soldiers pursuing an enemy.

Excess in all being a fault, many official hunters, owing to the encouragement held out by the State, gave themselves up entirely to this sport, totally neglecting all public business. In consequence of this, the Censors and other reasonable people advised the sovereign to moderate the laws, preferring to deprive themselves of their pleasure in the interest of the commonwealth. The chase was accordingly somewhat restricted by law, and began to be neglected.

An Emperor of the dynasty of the Liangs, noticing when he was out one day shooting

that a flock of wild duck had settled down in the field before him, drew his bow, and was just about to let fly, when a peasant passed in his line of fire. In spite of the cries of the attendants the peasant walked on his way, deaf and blind to their cries and their signals. Meanwhile the birds flew away. The Emperor was very angry, and spoke of shooting the peasant. One of his ministers who was out sporting with him, said, "Don't kill a man because game is wanting. A king must not be as savage as the beast that he hunts."

His Majesty, recovering from his anger, smiled, and took the arm of his councillor to re-enter his carriage. When he had reached home empty-handed he said, "I have had a very successful day, for instead of bringing home a good bag, I have had a good lesson."

Under the present dynasty the Court used to go out to the chase from time to time, and men of letters used to take

part in these excursions. Whenever a member of the Academy of Han-Lin shot a stag, he at once received a decoration of peacock's feathers. Since about thirty years, however, this institution has been neglected, as we have only had minors on the throne. But as the reigning sovereign has reached his majority, it is probable that before long he will return to these pleasures, which are as useful as they are agreeable.

There are no game-laws in China. Everybody has the right to shoot wherever game is to be found. It is quite usual for a landowner to see sportsmen walking about his estates with their guns on their shoulders, doing as if they were on their own lands. The golden pheasant is found in great quantities in China. It is one of the favourite pastimes of Europeans who live in China to shoot these splendid birds. Amongst other feathered game that we possess in China, I may mention woodcock, snipe, quail, wild duck,

and wild goose. In the way of fur we have stags, deer, roes, rabbits, and hares; besides foxes, wolves, bears, panthers, and tigers. Imitators of Nimrod will find plenty of sport in China.

CHAPTER XVII

FISHING

IF a certain number of men of letters take refuge in the pleasures of gardening, fishing also has its number of votaries. The bulk of these are men who, having lost all the illusions of life, and finding that politics are, after all, a hollow mockery, give themselves up to a quieter and less disappointing pastime.

The philosopher Tchang-Tseu used to fish on the banks of the river Han every day of his life. The Prince of Tchou, having heard him spoken about, sent an ambassador one day to the philosopher to beg him to enter the political life. Tchang-Tseu, his rod in his hand, spoke to the

fish without condescending to give any answer, finding that it was not worth while to do so. Another, still further back in history, by name Lu-Chan, used to pass his days in fishing in the river Pien. Emperor Weng-Ouang went one day in person to beg him to become one of his councillors, and appointed him, on the spot, Guardian of the Sovereign. Lu-Chan accepted the offer, and helped his master to rule his empire. The dynasty lasted eight hundred years, so solidly had the basis of the government been established by the fisher-minister. His master was the first Emperor of China who got the name of Saint. The people were never happier than under his reign. So great was the general prosperity, that even now-a-days, when they want to speak of a happy people, the Chinese say, "As if they were walking about under the reign of Weng-Ouang."

Another fisher, of Tsou-Kiang, who always trafficked his fish and wine, used to drink his fill, and then dance and sing in

his boat on the water, thinking himself the happiest man on earth. The prefect went to ask him if he was a genuine fisherman, or whether he concealed his identity under this disguise, and was a person of importance. "Never you mind," he said to the prefect. "Historical persons fish for titles, I satisfy myself with fishing for fish."

Under the reign of the Thangs, a man of letters, named Thiang-Tseu-Ho, withdrew on to the water and set up his abode on board a boat, which he called his floating-house, and gave himself the title of Fisher, in the midst of the waves and the mist. He published a quantity of songs for fishermen and oarsmen, which he was in the habit of singing on his aquatic excursions. The Emperor, taking pity on his solitude, sent, as a present, two servants, a young man and a young woman. The recluse married the two together, giving the name of Fisherman to the lad, and that of Shepherdess to the lass. The one looked after the fishing-tackle and rowed the boat, the other used

to go into the forest to gather dry wood and bamboos to make his tea.

History mentions the names of several fishermen of this philosophical class. There are besides these only professional fishermen, good folk who work hard, and live on very little.

Everybody knows that we have a goddess of the sea, but her story is not so generally known. She was the daughter of a family of fishermen who lived on the shore of Mei-Tcheou, quite close to Fou-Tcheou. Her father and her brothers used to go out fishing on the sea every day, each in his own boat, whilst she stayed at home to weave in the company of her old mother. She was adored by her parents, whom she loved very much. One day, during a storm which made everybody feel drowsy, she was dozing at the table, when she dreamed that her father's boat was just going to sink in the angry sea, and putting out her hand she caught hold of the painter to draw it into land. Meanwhile she saw that the boats on which her brothers

were, were in the same danger. So, putting the first cord between her teeth, she caught hold of the two others in her hands, and began walking through the water towards the shore. But before she could reach the shore she began to groan and cry, and her mother began to shake her, calling her by name. To answer her mother she opened her mouth and let the cord that she held between her teeth escape. When she woke up she thought that this was a nightmare; but that evening, when her brothers came home, they told her that her father had been drowned. The young girl, in despair at not having been able to save her father, who had died through her fault, rushed out and threw herself into the sea. Some time after she was often seen in visions by fishermen in moments of distress, and it was noticed that whenever she appeared the danger was overcome. Out of gratitude her protégés erected a little temple in her honour. Little by little her miraculous protection was extended to the ships of travellers and great officials, and

even to the navy. For each service rendered to the State a title was given her, and little by little she became known by the appellation of "Holy Mother of Heaven," a title which is accompanied by as many honorific qualifications as are worn by the sovereigns who delight to do her honour.

CHAPTER XVIII

CHARMING WOMAN

COQUETRY

ONE is none the less a woman for being a Chinese woman. Woman is the same everywhere. It is she who charms us—not to say who rules us. And no matter in what part of the globe, it is she who is always the great attraction of life.

They all know it; and without any need of a general understanding amongst themselves, all the sisters of the universe do the best they each can to render themselves more beautiful, or prettier, or merely more agreeable. They need for that no other

master that that instinctive desire to please, which is a special feature of the female nature. Albeit our women know neither how to grow fat or thin, or how to dye their hair, or how to make use of a thousand other tricks, which beauty uses to repair the irreparable ravages of time; they know how to paint themselves, and how to adorn their persons. They are very skilful in the use of red paint for the lips, of black for the eyebrows, and of white for the face. The particular taste of each race modifies the forms of coquetry. In Europe, you prefer large eyes and a Grecian nose; in China, small eyes and a thin and delicate nose are considered the most beautiful. On the other hand, we agree with you in admiring fine white teeth, and little wrists and ankles.

It is said, in China, that a woman's eyebrows should be elongated and thin, like the silhouette of distant mountains; that the eyes should be limpid, as water is in autumn; and the lips red, like dawn of day. Dimples are

greatly admired in China. We call them the "wine hollows."

The flush of the cheeks is called "the colour of drunkenness."

From Nature, let us pass on to Art.

Formerly, women used to dress their hair high up on their heads, the coiffure being built up on a framework of iron wire. Little by little this style was modified, and to-day the greatest simplicity is the rule. Our ladies dress their hair almost in the Greek style, with this difference, that the hair always remains smooth, curls never having been in fashion in China. I may add, that natural curls are quite unknown at home. A gold or silver pin, shaped like a double spatula, and bent in the middle, is fixed in the centre of the chignon, so as to keep the hair in place. Sprigs of flowers are fixed round this pin. Sometimes, in the spring, a little wreath of scented flowers is put on the back of the head. These simple ornaments are so much appreciated, that many ladies have a standing arrangement with a

gardener to bring them fresh flowers every morning.

A poet has said about this custom :

"After having finished dressing her hair she casts another glance in her mirror,
To see what kind of flowers will best suit her hair.
Therefore, before changing her morning toilette,
Behold her setting forth for the garden with a pair of scissors in her hand."

When flowers are wanting, butterflies, made in every conceivable shape, and of all kinds of materials, are placed in the hair above the temples. At grand ceremonies imitation flowers, made in jewels, are used instead of natural flowers.

The forehead is always left free. Only young girls wear fringes, the rest of the hair being allowed to fall down loose at the back of the head, or being gathered up into two bunches on either side. The enormous coiffure that you see in pictures, and which forms a kind of bull's head, is known as the coiffure in the style of "a crow with outstretched wings." It is now only to be seen in Canton.

Ladies in China never wear hats or bonnets. At ceremonies they wear a helmet-shaped crown, and on less solemn occasions a little band of embroidered stuff, which crosses the forehead and terminates in points behind each ear. In the centre is a large pearl or other precious stone, and round it a single or double row of pearls is entwined. Women wear shorter clothes than the men, the shape being about the same for both sexes. The clothes come down to the knees. On special occasions a petticoat, which comes down to the feet, is worn, while indoors a pair of trousers is added; which in the north is fastened round the ankles with ribbons, and left loose in the south. The upper garment has wide sleeves, with facings of embroidered satin. The uniform—for ladies in China wear a uniform on grand occasions suited to the rank of their husbands—consists in a dress of red satin, embroidered with dragons, over which is a garment shaped like a waistcoat, also embroidered. If the husband has a high

rank, the wife also wears a pearl necklace. Whatever may be the rank of the woman, she always makes her own shoes. There are no shops in China for the sale of women's shoes.

Jewels are never used for trimming dresses; at the very utmost, a few gold or jewelled buttons are sometimes used; but bracelets are worn in great numbers, according to the position and fortune of the wearer. Some young girls wear ankle-bands, also necklaces in the shape of collars, either in silver or gold, and fastened with a locket in the shape of a padlock.

The general custom of wearing the nails very long has caused the use of a special nail-glove, which is made of gold. It is shaped like a thimble, open at both ends, and is prolongated by a gold nail, which is intended to cover the real nail and to protect it. I may mention that in China, as everywhere else, it is the demi-monde that creates the fashions. But fashion varies considerably in the different provinces.

Only a few ladies, who have travelled a great deal, know how to combine the various styles, often with the happiest effect. As a rule, one can tell at a glance to what province a woman belongs.

One of the most feared of our Censors, a man before the severity of whose criticism the whole world used to tremble, and who was all the more feared that nobody could find any fault in him, was one day surprised in the act of painting his wife's eyebrows. I leave you to judge how delighted his enemies were to be able to tell the sovereign that this rigid guardian of public morality was, after all, but a very frivolous man. The Censor was sent for and asked if the report were true.

"Yes, your Majesty," he answered; "but what is there frivolous in that? Is not everything allowed between man and wife?"

The Emperor was quite satisfied with this answer, and the matter dropped. The story is repeated everywhere now-a-days as symbolic of domestic felicity. I see in it,

above all things, the triumph of feminine coquetry, which knows how to subjugate mankind, even the most austere, and enslaves us to its delicious trivialities and its irresistible frivolities.

CHAPTER XIX

FANS

I SAY fans in the plural, because we have two kinds, the folding fan and the round fan. We use the former during the mild seasons, and the latter during the very hot weather. The reason of this is not easily understood, as the round fan fans much less effectively than the other one. Doubtless it offers this advantage—that it can be used as a substitute for the parasol, which we never carry, and thus plays a double part. I may add, that in summer men and women alike go out bareheaded, so that some protection, such as is afforded by the screen fan, is needed. As a general rule, there

is a picture on one side of our fans, and some writing on the other. Common folk buy their fans ready painted and written upon, whereas people of fashion buy their fans blank, and ask distinguished people to illustrate them with a painting or a piece of writing. Some collectors possess hundreds of fans, which replace with us the autograph albums that you have in Europe.

Fans are given as presents to one's friends. They are always given by schoolmasters as prizes to their scholars.

The folding fan has a varying number of stems. Women's fans have generally thirty thin stems. The most common are made of bamboo; the best are made of ivory, betel, or sandal wood. They are carried in a case of embroidered satin, which is fastened to the belt by a ring of jade. The round fan is usually made of silk, with ivory or bamboo handles, the prolongation of which is either hidden between a double mask of stuff, or is visible on one side only. Ladies use them at

play for catching butterflies, or fireflies at night. On such occasions they fasten a sachet of scent to the end of the handle, which scents the air as the fan is moved.

The portrait of the fashionable poet of the day is always to be seen painted on the fan; thus Lu-Fong Oun, the popular poet of the thirteenth century, was surnamed Buddha of the Thousand Families, because his portrait was to be seen everywhere, and because his light and graceful verses could be understood by everybody. It is a very usual thing to compare a friend to a fan, because of his refreshing influence on the mind. A woman who fancies that her husband's heart is hers no longer will compare herself, as we shall see, to a fan cast aside in the autumn.

A favourite named Pan-Tie-Tsu, beloved at one time by Emperor Hiao-Tcheng, seeing herself deserted, sent a fan to her master, on which she had written the following lines:—

"I have just woven with my own hands this white silk,
White as the snow and as the ice.
I cut it to make a fan of it,
Round as the full moon is.
I would wish that it might be with you wherever you may go,
And that the air it gives you may, from time to time, refresh your memory.
I foresee, however, that when autumn comes,
Or the cold weather shall reduce the heat of the day,
It will be cast aside into some box, and removed from the favour of your Majesty,
Even as she is who gave it to you."

Another woman, who had been disfigured by disease, sent her lover a fan, on which she had written the four following lines :—

"Oh, the fan! Oh, the fan!
You serve to hide my unhappy face.
I am hideously ugly;
And I am ashamed to present myself before my lover."

Besides these two kinds of fans, there is also the feather fan, which was first made in the time of dynasty of the later Hans.

The Prime Minister, named Tsu-Kia-

Liang, used this fan for all his military commands. It was, in his hands, a substitute for the field-marshal's baton.

It is also said, that the first fan of this kind was introduced into China by the King of Siam, who sent it, with other objects, by way of tribute. But Tsu-Kia-Liang still, to-day, is represented with a feather fan in his hand, the baton with which he directed the orchestra in the symphony of the battle.

Betel leaves, cut into the shape of a fan, are also used in China. As this dry leaf can neither be written nor painted upon, it is decorated with engravings, either of pictures or of writing, which are traced upon it by means of a lighted stick of incense. This delicate and difficult work is generally done by women. Both leaves and incense come from Formosa.

Another kind of fan is made in Canton. A bamboo stick is taken, of which one end is left to serve as handle. The upper end is shredded into very fine threads,

which spread out into the shape of a lyre; silk is passed over these, and the lower part of the lyre is consolidated with a piece of curved wood, through a hole in which the handle passes. It is a very pretty kind of fan, and wears very well indeed.

All these varieties are fancy articles. In ancient China, the round fan alone was known; the folding fan has only been known since the last five centuries. It was first presented by the Corean ambassadors to Emperor Ung-Lo, of the Ming dynasty. The sovereign found it not only pretty, but very convenient, and less troublesome to carry, and gave orders for the manufacture of a large quantity, to be distributed amongst the officials of his empire.

This is all that I consider it necessary to say about fans in China. It may be found that I have used a great many words about very little. But how can words be better used, since it was said of them by an ancient Roman that they fly, than in speaking about winds and fans?

CHAPTER XX

CELEBRATED BEAUTIES

BEAUTIFUL women are called in China flowers, or jade jewels, or still better, the destroyers of the empire, or the destroyers of cities. The latter nicknames originated in a poem of the celebrated Li-Yan-Nein, of the dynasty of Han, thus conceived:

"A beautiful woman lives in the north,
Whose beauty has never in any age been rivalled;
To see her is to lose the empire.
If one sees her twice, the kingdom no longer exists.
But I may add, that one prefers to lose both empire and kingdom
Than to renounce the beautiful woman whom one will never see again."

The poem fell under the eyes of the Emperor, who immediately asked if such a woman really did exist, or was only the creation of the poet's imagination. On receiving an affirmative answer, he expressed his desire to know this beauty, and it was upon her that he afterwards bestowed his exclusive favour. An Emperor is no less a man.

One of the favourites of Emperor Han-Wou-Ti, named Li-Kiang—pretty girl—conquered the heart of her sovereign at the age of fourteen. Her beauty was perfect, and her body was of extreme delicacy. She clothed herself alone in the lightest tissues, for fear that coarser stuff might injure her very delicate skin. Her master built for her a crystal palace, so that, as he said, no dust should come to stain the whiteness of her darling person. Her breath was so sweet, that when she sang all the flowers in the garden danced.

Emperor Ouei-Weng-Ti, having heard it said that a young girl named Sie-Ling-

Yung was reputed to be of incomparable beauty, wrote to the prefect, bidding him to send her to the capital. On bidding good-bye to her parents, Sie-Ling-Yung wept red tears, which were tears of blood.

Her reception at the capital was an extremely brilliant one. The Court sent out ten carriages to meet her, and sandal leaves were burned all along the way she was to pass through. A lofty tower was erected for the occasion, and was illuminated, as were all the houses in the city.

It was a memorable night, and is still mentioned in our histories. His Majesty went out in person to meet the beautiful woman, driving in a carriage of carved jade. At regular intervals bronze milestones, two metres high, had been erected. At last this marvellous woman was received in the arms of the sovereign, who gave her the name of Ye-Lae, which means "She who came in the night."

She was an incomparable artist at embroidery. She could embroider in the dark

masterpieces which could not be imitated in daylight by any other woman. On account of this she was also called "The Genius of the Needle."

The celebrated poet Soung-U says, in a poem about his neighbour:

"All the beautiful women in the world
Are not worth my lady neighbour of the west.
Were you to add one inch to her height, she would be too tall;
Were you to reduce her stature by one inch, she would be too small.
Powder would give her too white a colour,
Vermilion would make her look too red.
Her eyebrows are like the lightest feathers;
Her skin is like the purest snow;
Her waist is small as a piece of silk;
And her teeth resemble a row of pearls.
When she condescends to smile, the most reasonable man is troubled."

It is a matter of great regret in China that the poet did not even mention the name of this beauty, who, according to his account, must have been as desirable a person as she was desired by him.

When the famous Fi-Yen—The Flying

Swallow—was presented to Emperor Yang-Ti, he was transported with joy. Not only was she beautiful, but her body was so light, that the king used often to take her up on one hand to play with her. In a moment of effusion the Emperor said that he had only one ambition in life, and that was to live and die by the side of her whom he loved, and that, unlike his ancestors, he should not commit the folly of seeking for the land of clouds, by which he meant Paradise.

There have been so many celebrated beauties in China, that it is quite impossible to mention all their names here. Let us be satisfied by saying, that some, when they wash their hands in the streams, scent the water; that others found their beauty improved by a little wound on their faces; that some shamed the flowers themselves; and that one of them compelled the moon to hide her face. All those who deserved the name of beautiful woman, owed all their charms to Nature; those that tried

to imitate them, only rendered themselves ridiculous. History relates apropos of this, that the beautiful Si-Si used to have the habit of laying her hand to her heart, which gave her an additional charm. Another woman, who lived in her village—thinking that it was this gesture alone that caused her neighbour to be so much admired—imitated it, and got laughed at for her trouble; for, as it was pointed out to her, she had overlooked the fact that what is natural is beautiful, whilst what is forced is often absurd.

Men used to be magnificently gallant towards these beautiful women. Some housed them in golden palaces, others sheltered every step that they took with tents of gauze, so as to protect them against the sun and the wind. Others had screens of pearls carried before their lady-loves, more beautiful than the pearls which were intended for their adornment. It will be seen that our writers did not lack in metaphors for the celebration of charming women. They were

in the right. The flowers of rhetoric are never better employed than when applied to those women which the gallantry of our language has baptized with the name of flowers.

CHAPTER XXI

SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

THE STUDENT

WHEN a child in China reaches the age of five or six years, his parents, no matter what their position may be, begin to think about giving him a master, so that his education may be commenced. Although instruction is not compulsory in China, I do not know of any children who do not go to school. Of course, more or less time is spent there by the different scholars, according to their several intelligences or the position of their parents.

A lucky day at the beginning of the year is chosen, and on this day the child is sent

to some celebrated man of letters to receive his first lesson, which consists in learning the three first lines of an elementary book called San-Tse-King, in which every sentence consists of three syllables, and which resumes the history of China and the duties of man.

This task having been accomplished, the boy is sent to school, where his real instruction commences, for the course we have spoken about is a mere preliminary formality, undertaken by an honorary professor. As soon as he has got safely through the San-Tse-King, the boy passes on to a second book, called the Tsien-Tse-Weng, a work which contains one thousand different letters. At the same time, the scholar has to paint over in black letters drawn in red in his copy-book by the schoolmaster. At first the child is taken on the knees by his master, who guides his hand, but little by little he is left to himself. Later on, he is given a copy to trace through transparent paper, and so on. A more serious course of in-

struction, including the four classical works of Confucius and of Meng-Tse, and the five King, or sacred, books, follow this preparatory course. Whilst these studies are going on, the professor instructs his scholars in the poetry of the land. As an exercise, he gives as a daily task a line of seven words, the child having to compose a parallel verse. As an example, heaven, earth, mountain, water, and so on. When a child is able to give the parallel of a line of seven words his intelligence may be considered to be fairly well developed, as we shall see.

I remember one day at school the professor gave us the following theme, which in Chinese is a line of seven words, and which was suggested to him by a phenomenon which he had just witnessed :—

"The flexible body of the bee bends round a drop of dew on a flower."

My comrade, whose turn it was to answer, reflected silently for a long time, until at last, Providence helping him, he cried out,

seeing before his eyes a scene that was being enacted in the garden outside—

"The oblique eye of the sparrow stealthily watches the caterpillar curled up in a leaf."

I need hardly say that he was vigorously applauded by his comrades, and handsomely rewarded by the professor.

As soon as the books mentioned above have been done with, besides certain selections from historical and literary works, the scholar begins to try his hand at difficult composition, which is preparatory study for our general competitive examinations. These dissertations are composed after the method of the Bakou, which are the eight rules to be followed in composition. Subjects are taken from philosophy or politics, being always chosen from celebrated classical authors mentioned above, and especially from Confucius. Concurrently with these the student practises his hand at poetical composition, very difficult tasks being set.

The young candidates have to present

themselves, in the first place, at the annual examination, which takes place at the sub-prefecture—this examination being for the degree of bachelor of arts. The examination is a written one. Candidates must, before attaining this degree, undergo another examination before an Imperia lexaminer, specially commissioned for this purpose. The examination for the licence, or second degree, only takes place once every three years, as does also the examination for the third degree, which is that of doctor. The two examinations do not, however, take place in the same year, or at the same season of the year. The second examination is held in the autumn in the different provincial cities, the third being held at Pekin in the following spring. It is a very usual thing to see a young man, who has passed these three examinations one after the other, return home in triumph to his parents, who up till then have been occupying some very humble position; for in China these competitive examinations are open to all except such persons

as have followed dishonourable trades. The family of a common workman, who have had the good fortune to possess a son who has passed these examinations, becomes noble *de jure*, and the same honours are paid to the parents as to the son. In order to understand to what a degree public sympathy and encouragement are with a successful candidate, and the anxiety that every student has to pass to get his degrees, one must see the reception given to the successful students. When the names of the prize-winners are made public, the official employés come up in great state, carrying the nominations of the winners printed on huge pieces of red paper, which they stick up on the houses of the lucky ones. They are received with crackers and squibs, and candles and incense are burned before the ancestors and the light of day, in token of gratitude for the distinguished favour accorded to the candidate. A day is fixed for the due celebration of the victory, and all the candidates who have passed are present at this feast. From early dawn the

families of the successful ones decorate their houses with flags, and await the arrival of their friends and neighbours, who come to bring their congratulations. The candidates go round in person to pay calls on all their friends, riding in sedan-chairs, and dressed in special clothes sent them by their parents-in-law, or in the case of bachelors, by their nearest relations. Those who have won the degree of bachelor wear a blue silk dress, the licentiates one of darker blue, while the doctors wear violet silk. A stiff kind of cape, embroidered in gold and coloured silks, is worn over the shoulders, and two sprays of flowers decorate the hat. In front of the sedan-chair men walk, carrying banners of red silk attached to bamboos still in leaf, while the musicians play their most joyful airs. The auspicious day is called the Day of the Reception of Flowers. For it appears that formerly women used to strew flowers in the paths of the young scholars. The procession fills many hearts with envy. How often have I not heard mothers saying to

their children, "Your turn will come some day if you will only work."

Success at these examinations opens every door to the young man, and the only thing that is feared is non-success. Once the examination passed, the career and the fortune of the young man are assured. The bachelor man of letters will at once receive offers of marriage from rich families. This will explain why no laws of compulsory education are necessary in a country where, by study, a man may from one day to another transform the social position of his family. Ambition urges people on to secure a good education for their children. Our students are sober folk. There is no Latin Quarter for him to frequent, politics disturb him not, and the only amusements that he knows of are poetical competitions and excursions into the country. His life is one of work and retirement, but he is never heard to complain, and has indeed no reason to do so; for the future smiles upon him, and

the dusty volumes with which he is surrounded hold out to him the promise of what a familiar locution describes as "the highest honours, the most beautiful women, and the happiest life."

CHAPTER XXII

POETICAL COMPETITIONS

IN literary circles in China, the most popular amusement is to make verses. Instead of shooting, or playing lawn-tennis, or croquet, or of indulging in any of the many pleasures enjoyed in Europe, our literary folk, as soon as a certain number of them have a little time to spare, meet together in turn at each other's houses, and give themselves up to poetical tournaments. For, in China, open receptions, political meetings, and public lectures are totally unknown, and the only way that people have of indulging the fancies of the mind is in the culture of pure literature. These poetical

tourneys take place all over China, but it is especially in the province of Fou-Kien that they are most common. Thus, when the late Imperial Commissioner of the arsenal of Fou-Tcheou, who was also Viceroy of Nankin, could spare a moment from his official duties, it was his habit to call in his subordinates and compose poetry with them. There are many kinds of verses, and before the opening of the contest it is decided what kind of verse is to be written. A historical or a fancy subject is set, and each of the competitors is asked to write a poem of four or eight lines on this subject. Sometimes two subjects are given, and these must be treated in parallel verses of seven syllables each, each line specially treating one or other of the two subjects. Another way is to choose two words, which must appear in a certain place in two parallel lines of poetry. I give below some examples, which will help the reader to understand these rules. As soon as all the competitors have met, a

vase is passed round. This vase contains, written on bits of paper which have been rolled up into balls, words denoting certain functions connected with the tourney, such as examiner, copying-clerk, candidate, &c. Each candidate draws one of the papers, and thus it is decided who shall compete and who shall form the committee. Two examiners and four or eight clerks are chosen, according to the number of candidates. One of the examiners then takes up a book and opens it at hazard. Another names a number, say nine. The examiner then reads the ninth line of the page at which the book is open, and from this line a phrase, or sentence, or word is selected to form the subject of the composition. As soon as the subject has been decided upon, another vase is placed upon the table, to which a bell is attached. A thread hangs from the bell, and at the end of the thread is a lighted stick of incense. In about half-an-hour the incense burns out, the thread catches fire, and, as it snaps, lets fall the

counterweight of the bell, which rings, and the lid of the urn falls too. It is then too late for any more poems to be entered for examination. The copying-clerks now empty the vase of the poems, which have been put into it by the competitors, and copy them out, all on one and the same piece of paper, to be submitted to the examiners. By this means anonymity is strictly protected. These make a selection, and when they have decided which of the poems is the best, one of them gets up in a kind of desk and sings forth the prize poem. Each competitor may write as many poems as he chooses on the subject that has been set, but has to pay a small fee for each entry. This money is used for the purchase of paper, brushes, ink, and the prizes which are awarded to the winners. As soon as the prizes have been awarded, a fresh competition of a different kind is commenced. The two poets, whose verses were considered the best in the previous competition, assume the functions of exa-

miners in the second tourney, and this arrangement continues throughout. In the evening a dinner brings the fête to an end. I will now submit some specimens of the kind of poetry which is written at these tourneys.

MIDNIGHT.

(*Eight-lined Poem.*)

"The moon shines at midnight
At the top of the white wall,
Over which sway the leaves of the bamboo,
Casting their shadows on the earth;
Whilst the blinds of the windows remain dark and silent,
The fire-flys alone gleam in the scented dew.
Be careful not to walk near the pond,
For fear of awakening the amorous swans."

THE RETURN OF THE LABOURER.

(*Quatrain.*)

"The mantle of palm fibres and the hat of bamboo leaves are both spotted with water.
Drops of rain, like very fine threads, fall on the plough.
It is the best season of the spring.
The peach-tree blossoms gleam at the corners of the walls, and the cuckoos are singing."

THE BLACK PEONY AND THE WAX TAPER.

(*Double Subject for Parallel Verses.*)

"His nature is wealthy, so it is a matter of small import to him that he is black.
His will is bent, how long will he remain red?"

There is a double play of words here. The name of peony alludes to the modesty of its position; the peony is sufficiently beautiful not to be afflicted thereby. Red is the aristocratic colour, and, at the same time, the colour of flame. The taper may consider himself a very brilliant object; the time must soon come when its flame must be extinguished, and it will fall back again into obscurity and darkness.

Here is another:

THE DRY BAMBOOS AND THE DEATH OF THE SOVEREIGN.

"Two sticks planted in the ground as drying poles for the red sleeves.
A thousand families weep heavenwards, whilst they put on white garments."

Dried bamboo stalks are generally used as drying-poles in China, and are set up

for this purpose in every courtyard. A cross-stick holds up the sleeves of the garments that have been hung out to dry. Numerous families put on white clothes. White is the colour of mourning in China.

There is a contrast between the mourning white and the gay red of women's garments.

Now, here is a poem of a different kind. In this the object was to place certain words in a position designated beforehand. The words given are "palace" and "battle." They have to be placed at the end of each verse :—

"The names of old servants is familiar to the parrots of the palace.
The merits of great generals are known to the chargers in battle."

Another, where the task was to place the words "great" and "autumn" at the beginning of the lines :—

"Great snowfall yesterday made me drink up all my wine.
Autumn rains prevent neighbours, and even the best friends, from calling upon each other."

I have had to recur to inversion, and so

have somewhat spoiled the appearance of these lines to get the words into their right places. Many people will find these pleasures of ours very simple, too simple perhaps. Whatever may be said, they are preferable to gambling. Besides, Europe, which also has her simple pleasures, will not blame us for ours.

CHAPTER XXIII

PAINTERS

CHINA has had its great art epochs, but for the last few centuries, education having been a purely literary one, art seems to have lost ground to a certain extent. However, it must be admitted, by those who care to look into the matter, that all is by no means lost. If we have not progressed during some centuries past, and if we have limited ourselves to the reproduction of certain types which were created long ago, if, in short, we show no originality, but only elegance and ease in our artistic productions, it must, at least, be admitted that we have scrupulously followed our ancient traditions.

Art flourished at its best in China in the reign of the Thang family. The poet, Tou-Fou, was an artist also, whilst the painter, Ouang-Wei, was a poet. Painting could be found in the poetry of the one, and poetry in the painting of the other. Although our old masters did not pay any attention to the laws of perspective, the works of their imaginations have always been highly appreciated. Some of their pictures are exceedingly rare, and like the two spoken about in the following poems of Tou-Fou, have to-day a priceless value :—

I.

"On a painting representing some horses, executed by General Tchao.

Since the accession of our dynasty,
There have been many painters of horses,
And the most celebrated of these is General Kiang-Tou.
Your reputation as a painter is now thirty years old,
And thanks to you we once more see the beautiful mounts.
Our late Emperor greatly appreciated your talents,

And your name ran through the capitals like the roll of thunder.
The decrees of the *Gazette* were never silent in your praise.
Generals after their triumphs have been rewarded,
Rich people after the rivalries of their luxury,
Cannot assert that they are quite contented,
Unless they have your pictures hanging on their walls.
Formerly Emperor Tai-Thoung was an amateur of horses,
And at the present day the Ko family is also so.
In your new picture the two horses
Are the envy of all sportsmen.
They have the appearance of war-chargers,
Which can hurl themselves one against a thousand.
Their white hair throws itself into the wind and the dust.
The others, quite as extraordinary, resemble
Now a cloud, now snow whirling in space.
Their delicate legs seem to run alongside the pine-tree forest,
Whilst the spectators who see them pass applaud.
Their heads aloft, their proud appearance, and their look, which expresses both pride and obedience.
Who is able to appreciate these beautiful horses?

Excepted Oui-Foung and Tsse-Tong.
I remember that when the Emperor used to go
to the Palace of Sin-Foung,
Flags and parasols coming from the east clouded
the sky;
Then 30,000 horses, some trotting, some gallop-
ing, resembled the horses in this picture,
Whilst this splendid cavalcade passes away into
memory.
The same forest where this Imperial and im-
portant procession was seen
Resounds to-day only with the song of birds,
Which harmonises with the whistling of the
winds.

II.

"You are the descendant of the Emperor Ouei-Ou,
Reduced to the state of simple citizen.
The splendour of your ancestors has dis-
appeared,
But blood and features perpetuate themselves.
Your literature has reached the degree of per-
fection,
And your painting makes you forget honours
which you do not covet.
Emperor Kai-Yung knew your glory, and re-
ceived you several times at his palace.
Thanks to your paint-brush, all our statesmen
live again in their portraits on the walls of
the Palace of Ling-Yen.

The Ministers brilliantly wear the crowns of their wisdom.
The Generals have their arrows in their quivers.
One might say that their Excellencies Pao and Mo are moving their hair and their beards,
Just as if they were returning from those battle-fields where they fought so brilliantly.
As to the splendid horse of his late Majesty, nobody knew how to paint his exact portrait.
A decree ordained that he should be brought before the palace so that you might fix him on a piece of silk;
And when your work was finished all the horses of the universe seemed to be plunged into darkness.
The Court already possessed the most beautiful horses;
It now possesses also the most beautiful picture.
The reward which you have now received is the admiration of all.
Your scholar, Han-Kang, is already on the way to perfection, but the horse he has painted is only skin with nothing beneath it;
He is far from possessing your genius."

This is a somewhat enthusiastic perception of our old paintings. We have a great number of amateur painters in China, chiefly amongst the literary classes, who paint pictures to give to their friends.

These pictures are precious, because poems are always written by the side of the paintings.

I remember having seen two celebrated pictures which would not be parted with at any price. One represents the open sea, in the middle of which a fisherman is seen in his boat, which is covered with snow. It is accompanied by a poem which fully equals the *Pauvres Gens* of Victor Hugo. The other represents a mountain with its top hidden in clouds. In the middle of the mountain is a stream which runs down to its foot, and floating in the water is seen a cabbage-leaf. The poem that is written on this picture ends with the following line:—

> "Behind the white cloud there were still people living."

And, sure enough, the cabbage-leaf bespeaks the presence of man, who alone could transport cabbage-leaves to the top of a cloudy mountain.

The allusion is sufficiently concealed; but, in China, this habit of veiling one's meaning is a very common one, and it is specially to

be noticed in the pictorial art. On the other hand, such subjects as the following are often suggested to painters: A red spot in the midst of green. One painter would paint on this theme a forest with a stork isolated on one tree; another would paint a red sunset in the green sea; another, a woman with red lips in a bamboo wood.

Artists, in China, never sell their pictures. They are always amateurs, and give their pictures away. The only art-wares which are trafficked in China are produced by workpeople, and belong to the category of decorative art. Sculpture is less cultivated at home by our amateurs, and one must know our sculptors to understand their ways. One of them once offered to make my bust. I went to his house, and he made me sit down in front of him. We were separated by a table, which was covered by a cloth which reached down to the ground. A very animated conversation began between us. My friend was a man of a very quick intelligence, and had a very original turn of

thought. I was quite taken up with what he was saying to me, but I still did notice that he kept his hands under the table, and this surprised me all the more that I observed after watching him some time that he was moving them with feverish activity. After I had been there about an hour, which had passed very quickly, thanks to our gossip, I was just going to rise, when my friend produced a mass of clay from beneath the table, and said, "Do you think that it is like you?"

I was not a little surprised to see that it was my bust, which, in spite of the rapidity with which it had been modelled, was very resembling; a thing which was very curious, as the artist had never once looked at the clay, but at my face alone. He must have had a wonderful skill to be able to use his fingers both as eyes and as tools, touch replacing sight.

CHAPTER XXIV

CHESS

THIS game differs very much from the one played in Europe, and which is the delight of the *habitués* of the European chess clubs. In our game there are three hundred and sixty-one pawns, divided into two camps, one white and the other black. These pawns are like round draughts. The game is played on a square chess-board which has nineteen squares on each side. The players set down pawn after pawn, and the one who succeeds in closing his adversary in, so that there is no possible issue for him, wins the game. The skill in this game consists in closing your adversary in, and

in taking as many of his pawns as possible —advancing wedge-like into his territory, without losing any of your own forces. It has been said that this game—the board of which represented the firmament, the stars being represented by the three hundred and sixty-one pawns—was invented by Emperor Yao, and used by him to instruct his children and teach them to think. It is, at the same time, a military game, representing a battle-field and two hostile camps, each doing its best to conquer the other. In short, it is rather a game of patience, for each game lasts a very long time, the reflection of a quarter or half-an-hour being sometimes needed before playing a pawn. On this account it is called "game of conversation," for the player who is waiting for his adversary to play has plenty of leisure to talk. It is also known by another name, that of "meditation in solitude," which seems a very good name for it. It is the favourite pastime of literary men, ladies, and especially of people who

have retired from business. The noise of the pawns as they are placed down on the different squares of the board, which is often engraved on a marble bench, under the shade of leafy trees, is considered a very poetical noise. The three things that one loves to hear, when one wishes to turn one's thoughts towards what is pure and delicate, are the sounds of water falling, the wind among the trees, and the rattle of this game of chess. It has been said that under the reign of the Tching dynasty a woodcutter met two young men who were playing at chess at the top of a mountain. He watched them, and one of them gave him a kind of candied fruit which he swallowed. Before the game had been finished, he noticed that the handle of his axe had rotted away. He made haste back to his village, and could recognise none of the people he met, for several centuries had passed away since he had gone out. History also tells us that a statesman named Li-No was a very impa-

tient man. But once seated at the chess-board his character completely changed; so that each time he felt that he was going to fly into a rage, his friends used to suggest a game of chess, and at once his good humour returned to him. One day the Emperor asked why he wasted at chess time which might be so much more profitably employed. He said that the moments during which a man forgets his worries are the most precious of all.

I read a very amusing little story in the "Memoirs of Sou-Toung-Pao." Emperor Tai-Tsung used to play chess with one of his ministers. The sovereign used to give him three pawns; but the minister always managed to lose one at the end of each game. The Emperor, noticing that he was being allowed to win, said at last, "If you lose this one more game I shall have you revoked." The game was played and ended in a draw. "One more game," said the Emperor. "If you win it I will grant you the honour of wearing a red robe, but

if you lose it I will have you dragged in the mud." The game again ended in a draw. His Majesty, in a great rage, was pushing his minister towards the pond to throw him into the mud, when the minister cried out, "Softly, softly, your Majesty, I have got one pawn left over in my hand." The sovereign smiled, and gave him the red robe that he had promised. The game is usually played in daytime in the summer and at night in the winter. Do not think that chess is played on any kind of table. The game demands a much more poetical setting, either trees or rocks, or a daintily furnished drawing-room, with tea and wine to be served between the games. It is considered a pleasure to watch the games, and it is etiquette never to give any advice to the players. Besides this game of chess we have another variety, which resembles the one played in Europe more closely. It is played on a draught-board which has nine squares one way and ten the other, with two sets of pieces, which are arranged

in three rows, five pawns in the front row and behind them two cannons. Three rows further back is the king, having on one side and the other two councillors, two elephants, two horses, and two carriages. The two camps, which cover each a space of nine squares, are separated one from the other by a single row of squares. The rules of this game are almost the same as in the European game. The pawns can only advance straight forward, and on only one square at a time; the cannons must always pass over a piece in a straight line; the carriages go straight ahead; the councillors go diagonally, and may not leave their camps; the elephants go straight ahead, backways or sideways—like the castles in the European game; the horses are moved like your knights; and, finally, the chief is played just like the king in the game here, and equally when the king is placed so that he is in check from one of the pieces of his adversary, without being able to get away or to take the piece, he is check-

mated, and the game is lost. The pieces are not represented by figures, but have their designations written on them. Our industry, so profoundly artistic, has neglected to occupy itself with this game. On the other hand, we manufacture figures of carved ivory for export sets of chess.

CHAPTER XXV

AT TABLE

THE PLEASURE OF DRINKING

WINE was first manufactured in China by a functionary named I-Ti, under the reign of Emperor U (22,000 years before Christ), from fermented rice. The sovereign was the first to taste this new beverage. He found it delicious, and said, "I am sure that hereafter there will be families of kings who will lose their thrones through drinking wine." But his prophecy was never realised in spite of his prophetic tone, and literary men continue to indulge themselves in wine to their heart's content. There is no party without

wine, and no wine-party without poetry. But by no means do we intoxicate ourselves. I remember that, some years ago, a German deputy, criticising the law against drunkenness, pronounced these words:—"If your law is passed, the people alone will suffer, for the rich, after getting drunk on champagne in their private houses, can always manage to escape the notice of the police, for, if they have to go out, they can go out in their carriages." The law was not passed. There would be no necessity for such a law in China, because the people there never get drunk. Our custom of seeking for happiness in drinking wine dates from the time of two celebrated poems, written by Li-Tai-Pe of the dynasty of the Thang family.

"Do you not see that the water of the Yellow
River seems to come down from heaven,
And throws itself into the sea without ever
returning to its sources?
Do you not see also that the mirrors in our
drawing-rooms beweep our hairs,
Which, black this morning, are now already
white?

When one is dissatisfied pleasure takes wing ;
The golden jug must not stand there motionless and untouched before the moon.
Heaven has given us talents to make use of—
Thus the money that we spend will always return to us.
Let us slay the sheep, let us roast beef for our pleasure.
When we meet, we will each empty three hundred glasses.
You, Master Kien, and you, Ten-Kiou—the literary man—
Lift your glasses without ceasing.
I wish to sing to you, and I beg you to listen to me.
Long since honours have ceased to have any value ;
I would rather be drunk than awake.
Sages and philosophers were always too sad,
Whilst topers remained gay.
Prince Tcheng was not fond of music ;
He preferred to spend ten thousand crowns to buy a measure of wine.
Do not say that you have no money—
Continue to supply us.
Take my horse, my fur coat, and go and exchange them for good wine,
For I intend to forget, in your company, the cares of eternity.

The wind brings with it the blossoms of the
willow, which scent the whole room;
And the beautiful lady who invites us to keep
on drinking her wine.
The people of Nan-King are there to bid fare-
well to their friends,
Who, having to go, have not yet gone.
Ask you of the water that flows to the east,
If it is deeper than is the sorrow of our separa-
tion."

Another poet of a later date used also to give himself up to immoderate drinking. His wife advised him to moderate his passion. He asked for five jugs as the price of this sacrifice, and when he had drunk them he went to sleep. On waking, he asked for five more jugs of wine, and having emptied these, he wrote the following quatrain for his wife:—

"Heaven has created Liou-Ling,
Who cannot live without wine;
And as to the advice given him by his wife,
He should pay no attention to it."

Grape-wine is unknown in China, and the only allusion to it that I know of is to be found in the following lines, which were

written by a warrior who lived in the north of China, under the reign of the Yang family :—

"Grape-wine gleams in the glasses at night—
I should like to drink but the guitar urges me to go.
Do not laugh at me if I fall asleep on the field of battle,
For since ancient times how many warriors have returned from war?"

Li-Tai-Pe made an abusive use of wine. He found friends everywhere, even when he was alone, for then the moon and his shadow were his friends. But in spite of that, he knew how to associate with the pleasure of drinking the most delicate sentiments and very lofty philosophical views, as may be seen in the following poem :—

"What has become of the towers and the flags of King of Tsou which formerly were accumulated on the tops of hills now deserted?
When drunkenness elevates me, I lower my paint brush, and my songs shake the five mountains.
I am glad, and am proud, and I laugh at all greatness.

Power, wealth, honours, before your duration
shall be sufficient to merit my esteem.
The Yellow River will be seen starting from the
west to flow towards the north."

Since that time a kind of drinking game has been invented. A tube, in the shape of a cylinder, is placed on the table. It contains a number of ivory rods, each of which is inscribed with an ancient verse. Each player draws one of these rods, and according to the verses on them, it is decided which player is to drink. Here are some examples :—

"Alas! Where is the handsome face to-day?
(The most bearded player has to drink.)
In love with a shadow or a sound.
(It is the shortsighted man's turn to empty his glass.)
We see each other without hearing our voices.
(The deaf man drinks.)
There is still half the time left for contemplation.
(The player who wears spectacles drinks.)
The beaded blinds hide the faces of the roses.
(The pock-marked player drinks.)

He who is in love with the flowers regrets that they have no voices.

(The silent man drinks.)

The cries of modern ghosts mingle with the cries of ancient spectres.

(The doctor drinks.)

It will be seen that in China the pleasure of drinking does not lack in those gaieties with which wine is always accompanied.

CHAPTER XXVI

TEA-DRINKING

THAT tea is our favourite drink is very generally known, but people may perhaps ignore the considerable part that it plays in our lives. I will not speak here either about its cultivation or the process of its manufacture, which are pretty well known. I will limit myself to telling the use that is made of this precious aromatic plant. Since tea has been known in China, a part of the first pickings of the harvest is sent each year to the Emperor by the authorities in the producing districts. This is called "The Tea Tribute." Formerly, the Court used to distribute tea to the officials, and the usual presents consisted

of tea. Another thing shows the importance that we attach to this article, and that is, that we have tea-inspectors, just as we have salt-superintendents, who are high functionaries specially commissioned for the purpose. Instead of cafés, as in Paris, we have nothing but tea-houses in China, and these may be seen everywhere. It is at these tea-houses that people meet to talk, to rest, and to enjoy the cool air. When you call on a friend the first thing that he does is to offer you a cup of tea. When you write an invitation to a friend to come and spend some time at your house, the formula you use is, "The tea is ready."

Whilst you are waiting in a shop for your orders to be executed, the shopman hands you a cup of tea to help you to be patient. In the very hot weather, charitable people in towns always put outside their doors great urns of tea for thirsty passers-by to drink from, and these urns are refilled as soon as they have been

emptied. Those are our public fountains. There is always tea ready in the work-rooms and other places where workpeople meet. Tea is the only drink used by the people. Amongst the highest in the land there are also numerous tea drinkers. It is thought that this beverage has the gift of rendering one's mind more lucid. It is always green tea that is drunk in the upper classes—the little leaves taken from the bud at its first opening and dried in the sun. This is our Château-Lafitte. As to black tea, it is made of leaves which have reached maturity and have been dried artificially. This is all the difference that there is between the two kinds. No artificial colouring of the leaves is ever resorted to. Qualities vary, of course, according to the localities in which the tea is grown, just as is the case with wine. The best tea is that grown on a tree which grows in the garden of a monastery which is situated on the Ou-I mountain, in the interior of the province of Fou-Kien. The priests do not sell

it, but keep it for the use of distinguished visitors. They give you about ten leaves in a cup not much bigger than an egg-cup, and pour on it water taken from an excellent spring which is situated near the monastery. The cup is covered for a few moments to allow the tea to draw. The scent that rises from the cup when the tea is ready is most exquisite, and a cup of this tea not only produces a feeling of great bodily comfort, but also has a most exhilarating effect on the mind.

I once amused myself by placing a few grains of boiled rice in a cup of that tea. The rice was almost immediately dissolved. This made me understand how energetic is the effect of this beverage, its beneficial action on the human body, and the impossibility of drinking much of it.. Tea is so essential a factor in Chinese alimentation that authors like Lu-U have published whole books on the way of preparing this drink. These books are our Mrs. Beeton's. Tea, as a matter of fact, to be good, must

be made with rain or spring water heated to a certain degree of heat. The water should not be allowed to boil more than a few minutes, and, when bubbles begin to rise, it should be taken off the fire. The utensil in which the water is boiled should be made of certain materials and no others. True connoisseurs only use pots made of Ni-Hing, a kind of terra-cotta ware which is not varnished inside. Thus prepared, the tea is an economical and healthy beverage. It is drunk continually and at all hours of the day, even just before going to bed. Its effect is never an exciting one. Apropos of this, one of my compatriots has said that the Europeans, and specially the English, do not know how to make tea. In the first place, they let it boil. Secondly, they add strong spirits, which destroy its taste; or sugar, which makes it lose its savour. Tea should be allowed to infuse for five minutes at the most, and should be of a clear colour, barely yellow in hue. The U-Tchien, or Jade-Spring monastery, is

situated in the province of King-Tiou, in the midst of rocks and waterfalls, and is surrounded with tea plantations, which produce tea-leaves of the size of a man's hand, which are called "The Tea of the Hand of the Immortals." An octogenarian who lived in that neighbourhood had the face of quite a young man, and enjoyed the very best health, and used to tell anybody who would listen to him that he owed his good health and his youthful appearance to the use of this tea. It is not surprising that so beneficial a drink should have inspired the poets. There is an innumerable quantity of single lines about tea in our literature. Here are a few specimens of these proverbial sayings which refer to tea :—

"To make your friends pass a pleasant evening the poor man offers them tea.

To make tea with snow is to taste celestial savours.

When you make tea in the forest, the smoke drives the storks away."

The harvest time varies according to the

district. In some parts the harvest is picked before the rainy season. In others, it is begun at the sound of the first clap of thunder; in other parts, the first cry of the cuckoo is the signal for the pickers to begin their work. All sorts of stories are told about our tea, amongst others, that the tea we export has already been used and dried again. That is a mere fable. The tea we export is of average quality, and is so abundantly to be had that there is no necessity for us to take recourse to the disgusting expedients suggested. I may add that the export trade is almost entirely in the hands of European business houses. Besides, all our old tea-leaves are used in China as sea-weed is used in France for stuffing mattresses, cushions, and so on. Thus tea, after having fortified our bodies during the day, affords us a bed at night.

CHAPTER XXVII

CHOPSTICKS

ALTHOUGH our chopsticks may have some resemblance to magic wands, the purpose they fulfil is a much more prosaic one, and, at the same time, a much more useful one. They are the auxiliaries which help us to convey to our mouths the food which we need for our bodies, the coal required by the human machine. It is generally thought in Europe that we use two chopsticks—one in each hand—for taking up the morsels of food, and for conveying these to our mouths. That is a mistake: our knife and fork exercise is much less complicated. The chopsticks are held in the right hand.

Maintained by the thumb and the ring-finger, they are worked by the index and the middle finger. One remains motionless, the other manœuvres and catches up the fragments of meat, and even the smallest particles of rice. When rice is eaten, the bowl containing it is brought very close to the mouth. The chopsticks work with féverish activity, for rice is our daily bread, and we can admit of no slip between the cup that contains it and our lips. It may be thought that the use of the chopsticks demands very great skill, but that is only the prejudice of those accustomed to the use of the fork. A child can learn how to use the chopsticks as easily as the utensils in use in Europe. It may be mentioned that we also make use of forks for roast meats, and of spoons for taking up liquids. The Book of Rites, which deals with all the acts of life, mentions that chopsticks are to be used for all purposes except for drinking soup. The use of the spoon was thus consecrated many centuries ago. The

chopsticks are not plain, shapeless pieces of wood. They are made of bamboo, or of more precious woods, and also of ivory and silver. The top part, which is from eight to ten inches long, by from four to six broad, is square, the remaining part being round. On one of the sides of the square top part, poems and pictures are engraved. Under the reign of the Han family, the Emperor was dining one day at a political banquet with his ministers, when one of them—Tcheng-Liang by name—rose to his feet and said: "Your majesty's cause is lost. I have just consulted my chopsticks." And as it turned out, the Emperor's plan of conquest failed. Even to-day the cleverness of this statesman, who knew how to disguise his own opinion in the form of a revelation by his chopsticks, and to pass off his own advice as the result of a Divine inspiration, is much admired.

Some centuries later, the famous dictator, Tchao-Tsao, was dining with a rival of his, who tried to hide his ambition under the

most modest appearance. Tchao-Tsao was anxious to publicly expose the designs of his rival, whom he had seen through, and began to talk of the bravest men of the day. Each mentioned certain names, and finally Tchao-Tsao said, "We two alone are really courageous men." Hearing himself thus directly named, Liou-Pei, as the rival was called, dropped his chopsticks just as a clap of thunder was heard rolling through the sky. He tried to hide his emotion, and said, "Ah! how great is the power of heaven, I really was frightened." But he was unable to divert the suspicion to which his terror had given rise.

Under the reign of the Thangs, Kai-Yang presented a pair of gold chopsticks to his Minister of State, Soung-King, saying that he made him this present, not on account of the intrinsic value of the gold, but because the chopsticks were symbolical by their shape of the straightforwardness of his character.

It is recorded of a gourmet, named Ho-Tseng, who used to spend a large sum of

money on his food, without ever being able to satisfy his tastes, that he fed like a prince, and though he spent upwards of a thousand crowns on his table, did not consider a single dish worthy of his chopsticks.

The number of historical anecdotes told about chopsticks is far too large to be given here. Let me, however, quote one of these anecdotes :

"A sea-shell which had the elongated form of a stick, and which is known as the solen or razor, is greatly appreciated in China. It bears a mark on its side. It is said that an Emperor having taken a solen up in his chopsticks, cast it into the lake. The mollusc multiplied, but each of its descendants preserve the traces of the chopsticks of Emperor Han-Ou-Ti."

Let me conclude with four lines of poetry about the chopsticks, which were written by one of our philosophers :

"I often wish to consult my chopsticks,
Which always taste what is bitter and what is sweet before we do.
But they answer that all good savour comes from the dishes themselves,
And that all that they do is to come and to go."

CHAPTER XXVIII

CHINESE COOKING

SO many dreadful things have been said about Chinese cooking, that I think it indispensable to devote a chapter to the rehabilitation of our culinary art. I do not pretend to make your mouths water, but I should like at least to be able to show you that my countrymen do not eat the extraordinary things attributed to them by certain prejudiced travellers. Our ordinary meal consists of eight dishes — two vegetables, eggs, a fish, some shell-fish, a bird, two dishes of meat, pork and goat in the south, and mutton and beef in the north. Besides this, a large tureen of soup is served with the rice, which takes the place of bread

at our tables, and is our substitute for wine and tea, which are only served on very great occasions at meal times. Food being extremely cheap, the cost of three daily meals, similar to the one described, never exceeds fivepence per person. A pound of meat costs only twopence halfpenny, or threepence, whilst the price of a good fowl is sixpence, or, at the most, sevenpence.

In 1882, I embarked on board a Chinese ship at Hong-Kong, on my way home. Not being able to accommodate myself with the fare on board, I told a servant that I should like a chicken for lunch, and gave him a dollar to buy it with, this sum representing the usual cost of a chicken in France. A minute or two later he came to ask me how he was to prepare it. "Cut it up and stew it in its juice," I said, "and season well." Shortly afterwards he brought me a huge trencher, resembling a tub, filled with a fricassee of little pieces of smoking chicken.

"What! All that?" I cried.

"Yes, sir. With your dollar I got twelve

chickens, and have cooked them as you told me to do."

At the sight of this quantity of meat, and of the pantagruelic dish in which they were served, my appetite disappeared, and I made him carry the dish away, and distribute it among the servants in the kitchen. I mention this to show how little provisions cost at home. A workman earning one franc, or tenpence a day can keep a wife and two children in comfort, and still put by half his earnings.

When I was at the military school, where the cadets mess like officers, all I had to pay for my food was fourpence a day, and was so well fed for this money that I never had any cause for complaint. It is easy to understand the reason why things are so cheap in China. There are no taxes at home on articles of food. According to statistics, each inhabitant of the Empire pays two francs, or eighteenpence, in taxes per annum, but no part of this sum represents any tax on food. Europeans who

complain that they spend far too much money in China have only themselves to blame. I have never heard of any European who cared to live as we live. Parisian dishes, already very expensive in this country, are naturally trebly so in China, in spite of the fact that raw materials cost so little. Besides, the cuisine of each country depends on its climate. Since I have been in France I have accustomed myself to French cookery, reputed the best of all. Whenever I return to China, and am invited to dinner by French people, I get quite upset, and often feel quite ill after dinner. Coffee irritates my stomach, and cigars make my nose bleed. Now, when I am in Europe I cannot do without my coffee and my cigar after dinner. It is not surprising, then, that Europeans cannot enjoy life in China, persisting as they do in eating only what suited them at home. When a friend calls on you in China to take pot-luck with you, you usually ask him to a restaurant, and order a dinner in his honour. These dinners usually

cost six dollars, that is to say, twenty-four shillings for eight persons. The dinner is a very complete meal, as may be judged by the following bill of fare :—

Four plates of *hors d'œuvres.*
Four plates of dried fruits.
Four plates of fresh fruit, according to the season.
Four large dishes—a whole duck, sharks' fins, swallows' nests, and some kind of meat.
Four middle-sized dishes—poultry, shell-fish, and meat.
Four small dishes or bowls, containing mushrooms, morels, which we call ears of the forest, rice of the immortals, which is the name we give to a kind of mushroom, and the tender sprouts of the bamboo.
Four large dishes, containing fish, sea-stars, and mutton.

These last four dishes finish the repast. As a rule, nobody touches them, and their appearance on the table is the signal for rising. The price of ceremonial dinners rarely exceeds twenty dollars, or four pounds, for eight persons. The list of dishes is a much larger one, and includes

two roasts, which are served at the middle of the dinner, together with little pieces of bread cooked in the *bain-marie*.

A servant, armed with a very sharp carving-knife, removes the skin of the roast, be it wild duck, goose, or sucking pig, and serves each guest with a little in a saucer. At the same time, another servant hands each guest a small cup, into which he pours rice brandy. I forgot to say that the table is cleared before the roasts are served, just as in Paris before coffee is brought on to table. Pastry is always served at our dinners, and is brought on between the courses. With salt pastry, containing meat, a cup of chicken broth is served, whilst with sweet pastry almond milk is handed round. I must add that dinner always begins with *hors d'œuvres*, including fruit, and ends with a bowl of rice, which may be eaten or not, according to the tastes of the guests. Tea is served immediately after dinner, and at the same time each guest receives a napkin dipped in hot water.

The diners sit at a square table, two on

each side. The first and third face the second and fourth, the sixth and the fifth face the courtyard, to which the seventh and eighth turn their backs. The eighth is always the master of the house, whose special function it is to fill the glasses of his guests with wine. When there are more than eight, several tables are used. If four tables are needed, the third and fourth are near the courtyard, whilst the first and second are near the drawing-room. *Hors d'œuvres* include, besides fruit, ham, gizzards, grated meat grilled, dried shrimps, and preserved eggs. The latter, thanks to their coating of lime, will keep for an indefinite period; after twenty-five years they are exquisite to the taste, having undergone a kind of transformation, the result of which is that the yellows have become a kind of dark brown in colour, and the whites, also brown, resemble meat jelly. I once made some European friends of mine taste some of these eggs, as well as other Chinese dishes, and they were delighted with them, all prejudice apart.

Once, however, a Berlin lady, after having found that our cooking was delicious, asked the name of each of the dishes of one of our interpreters, who, not knowing the exact translation of the technical expression, "sea-slug," answered that the dish in question was "sea hedgehog," or See-Igel in German. This was enough to disgust our amiable guest, who refused to continue her dinner. I was sitting next to her, and she told me that she could feel it crawling in her throat still, which shows how great is the force of imagination. Marquis d'Hervey de Saint-Denys gave a Chinese dinner during the Exhibition of 1867, and Cham, the famous caricaturist, drew the menu. There were some abominable things in this bill of fare, and the faces of the guests after they had glanced at it was a sight to be seen. It took the marquis all his eloquence to reassure them. I will not deny that there are people in China who eat these extraordinary dishes, but these are the exceptions to the rule. I repeat here, that never in my life have I seen

or heard of any one who ate cat or dog, a practice which only quite recently a writer in the *Figaro* accused us of. Apropos of this, I must relate a very curious thing that befell us, when, in the spring of 1878, our Legation first settled in Paris. One day I received a call from a footman in livery, who desired to speak to me in the name of his mistress, a Polish countess of very high position. This lady had amongst her pets twelve little Chinese dogs, those hairless little bow-wows that everybody has seen. She loved them dearly, and, being frightened lest the Chinese colony might eat up her darlings, sent me word, considering us apparently as wild beasts or savages, to the effect that if one of her pets should disappear she would set fire to the Embassy building. I re-assured the good old lady, and sent her word that none of my countrymen had an appetite for dog-meat, and that should she miss one of her pets one day it would be much wiser on her part, before committing the crime of arson with premeditation, to go

round to the police-station or to the dogs' home.

In short, we eat very much as you do, with rather more variety, thanks to the productiveness of our country and of our sea. But never are disgusting or even curious dishes seen on our tables. It is true that we prepare our dishes in a different manner. For instance, we cut the food up into very little pieces, in consequence of which the nature of the dish is not to be recognised, but our dishes are none the less delicious on that account. I could call in witness of what I assert all Europeans who have lived in China.

Cooking, moreover, is in exact ratio to the state of civilisation of each nation—the more developed the one, the more *recherché* and the more perfect the other. France is the country in Europe which was civilised the first, and its cuisine is the most perfect in the West. So, instead of asking us whether we are in the habit of preparing such and such a fantastic dish, the European would do better to ask from what year our civilisation dates. The

answer to this question would at once show him that it is absurd to attribute to us the consumption of disgusting dishes, and that this is the work of mere imagination, vivid perhaps, but completely in the wrong.

CHAPTER XXIX

GAMES OF SKILL

CONJURING

THERE are no theatres in China, like the Egyptian Hall in London, that is to say, conjuring theatres. The conjurer has to perform in public, in the squares, and places like his European brethren at the different fairs. Conjurers are often hired to perform at family parties, and never fail to win great applause. The Chinese conjurer is, at the same time, an acrobat, and knows both his trades very well indeed. The proverbial skill of our artists is really astonishing. The performance is generally opened with acro-

batic feats, and after having swallowed swords, juggled with weights, and gone through exercises of this description, the acrobat transforms himself into a magician. He throws off his gown, and as it falls to the earth, asks the spectators what object they would like to see. Something very difficult to produce is naturally chosen, and the sorcerer begins to make strange gestures with his fingers. He then approaches the gown, mutters some mysterious word of command to it, mesmerises it with strange mesmeric passes, and suddenly the gown is seen to rise from the earth, and rises and rises until the master, drawing back this moving curtain, discloses beneath it smoking dishes, or a large bowl filled with water, in which quantities of gold and silver fish are disporting themselves. This is one of the tricks that I have seen performed, and have never been able to understand how it was done. But one of my friends told me of something that he had seen which was much more astonishing. One day, in

the course of one of these performances, the conjurer asked his audience to name what they desired to see. One of the spectators asked for a pumpkin. The conjurer, at first, pretended that that was out of the question, as it was not in season. But, the public insisting, he gave way. He then took a pumpkin seed and planted it in the earth, and made his son—a lad of four or five years—lie down, and thrust his knife into his throat, as if he had been slaughtering an animal. The blood poured out into a pot, and when it had been collected the conjurer watered with it the spot where he had just planted the seed. He then covered the corpse up with a cloth, and placed a wooden bell over the seed. A few moments later a sprout was seen rising from the soil, which grew and grew and burst into flower. The flower fell, and the pumpkin showed itself, growing with extraordinary rapidity. When it was ripe, the magician picked it off its stalk, showed it to the public, and began making his collec-

tion. He then lifted up the cloth from his son, and instead of disclosing a corpse, brought to light a very healthy youth, who did not bear the vestige of a wound. All this was done with surprising neatness.

Another of my friends told me, on his return from Pekin, that he had seen still more extraordinary things. One day, after the literary examinations, the candidates clubbed together and sent for a troupe of conjurers. The chief, having shown certain tricks, asked if the audience would like to see some rare thing that they might choose. "A peach," cried one of the spectators. It was then the month of March, when the land is still ice-bound, especially in the north of China. "A peach!" said the conjurer; "that is the only fruit that it is impossible for me to procure. At this time of the year, peaches can only be found in Paradise."

"But as you are a magician," was the answer, "you ought to be able to bring one down from heaven."

After grumbling a good deal, the conjurer

said he would try what he could do for them, and began weaving a roll of ribbon, which he cast into the air, and which took the shape of a ladder, which went up and up to a tremendous height. He then placed a child on this ladder, who ran up the rungs with the agility of a monkey, and was soon lost to sight in the clouds. Some moments passed, when suddenly a peach fell from the skies. The magician picked it up, cut it into slices, and offered it to the audience. It was a real peach. Hardly had the peach been eaten, when something else fell from the skies. Horror! It was the head of the child, which was speedily followed by the trunk and the limbs. The sorcerer picked them up with tears in his eyes, and said that the audience was to blame for the loss of his child by its absurd request, and that the guardians of Paradise had taken his child for a thief, and had cut him into pieces. The spectators, touched at the sight of his sorrow, and believing that they were really to blame for a murder, and wanting to do all

in their power to comfort the unhappy father, made a collection, and presented him with a handsome sum of money. Meanwhile, the magician had placed the fragments of his son's corpse in a box, which he always carried round with him. As soon as he had received the amount of the subscription, he opened the box and cried out—

"Come forth, my child, and thank these kind gentlemen." And out sprang the youth, alive and well.

In concluding this chapter, I must tell a story about a ventriloquist. It was at a dinner given by a gentleman, who, as a rule, was very unhappy in life, and bored himself dreadfully when alone. He used to say that when he had no friends to talk to, the softest carpets appeared to him like bundles of needles, and the most beautifully decorated walls like bucklers. He used to write poems to kill time. When people knocked at his door he used to ask them to stay to dinner, whether he knew their names or not. That day not one of the guests who sat at the

table knew any of the others. The conversation turned on the question, which sound was the most agreeable. One of the spectators said, "It is the sound of the shuttle as it flies across the loom, or the voice of a reading child."

"No, no; that is too serious," said the host.

"Then it is the neighing of horses, or the concert of lady musicians."

"No; that is too noisy," said the host.

"The rattle of the pawns at chess played by women."

"Nor that. That is too monotonous."

The fourth guest said nothing, but continued quietly emptying his glass.

"What is your opinion?" asked the others.

"I have no opinion to give," said he; "but I should like to tell you about the sounds I heard in Pekin. They seem to me to be much superior to any others. They were the different noises emitted by a ventriloquist. He was seated behind a screen, where there was only a chair, a table,

and a fan, and a ruler. He rapped the ruler on the table to enforce silence, and, when everybody had ceased speaking, there was suddenly heard the barking of a dog; then the movements of a woman, waked by the noisy brute, who shook her husband to say tender things to him. We were just expecting to hear a duet of love between the two spouses when the noise of a crying child was heard. Then we heard the mother giving the breast to the baby, and the sound of it drinking and crying at the same time. The mother tried to console it, and then rose to change its clothes. Meanwhile, another child, waking in its bed, began to make a noise; its father scolded it, whilst the younger child continued crying at its mother's breast. Then the whole family go back to bed and fall asleep. The patter of a mouse is heard. It climbs up some vase and upsets it, and we hear the clatter as it falls. The woman coughs in her sleep. Cries of 'Fire, fire,' are heard. The mouse has upset the lamp, and set fire to the

bed-curtains. The husband and the wife, wakened, begin to shout and scream, the children cry, thousands of people come running up, and vociferate; thousands of children cry, dogs bark, the walls come crashing down, squibs and crackers explode—it seems a general *sauve-qui-peut*. The fire-brigade comes racing up; water is pumped up in torrents, and hisses in the flames. It was all so true to life that all present were about to rise to their feet and run away, thinking that fire really had broken out, when a second blow of the ruler was struck on the table, and the most complete silence ensued. We rushed behind the screen, but there was nothing except the ventriloquist, his table, his chair, and his ruler."

CHAPTER XXX

THE EVOCATION OF SPIRITS

A NUMBER of people believe in spirits, and make it a pleasure to summon them into their presence by way of pastime. A cylindrical box, containing a number of little sticks, each of which bears a number, may be seen in every temple, and before the altars of every god. When a man wants to know his future, he first of all burns candles and incense before the god; then he kneels down at the altar, holding one of these boxes in his hands. He then asks the question that he wants to have answered, and shakes the box gently until one of the little sticks fall out. This he picks up, and places it before the god; then he

takes two hemispheres, and throws them to the ground. If they fall on the flat side, that means that the little stick is the right one ; but if on the convex side, that means that the stick is no good, and the thing must begin over again. If the stick has been recognised to be right, it is taken to the guardian of the temple, who gives a number corresponding to the one printed on it. This number has written on it a motto such as you see in crackers in Europe, and it is according to this motto that the future is read. Sometimes most extraordinary results are obtained by this means ; at other times, however, the answer has no sense or portent.

Sometimes a plate is taken, and a piece of paper carefully wetted is applied to it. A Taoist priest is called, who begins by making mysterious gestures over the dish, and then rubs the paper on it with a piece of paper tightly rolled up. This rubbing produces a quantity of figures and scenes, and from these figures and scenes the future is predicted. Supposing a theft has been committed, the

plate will show the scene of the theft, with the portrait of the thief. A cheap and easy way of detecting crime, it must be admitted. More than that, it shows what punishment will befall the guilty man. If a needle is taken and the eyes of the portrait of the thief in the dish be struck with it, the real offender instantaneously becomes blind.

We have also a number of inspired hypnotic mediums and lucid somnambulists. They go to sleep, the spirit moves them, they rise up and predict what is going to happen, or cure the sick. They can be pricked with pins without feeling any pain, and can walk on burning coals without burning themselves.

We have no want of literary gods. A large dish is taken filled with sand, and then the two ends of a carved stick of wood are moved over it. The god guides the points, and a number of acrostic sentences and poems are the result, written in the sand. The spirits of well-known literary men of bygone ages are called for, and they are begged to attend the meeting, and to give some specimens of their poetic

talents. Let me describe one of these scenes.

The brush, after having moved about for some time, announces that a literary god is approaching. At once it begins to trace out the following quatrain :—

"Twilight covers half the mountains,
The tired birds return to their nests.
The stork, driven by the azure zephyr,
Comes down from heaven through the clouds."

Next a goddess presents herself and writes :

"The distant mountains are seen against the sunset, now bright, now pale;
A sound of bells seem to wish to pierce the aurora borealis.
My existence resembles the light cloud which in one moment crosses a thousand hills,
Which permits me to contemplate the ten thousand mountains in one moment."

The goddess asked at the same time that all those present should submit their poems, that she might applaud or condemn them. Each man gave a poem, which was immediately burned, so that it might reach in wraith the goddess.

Suddenly the friend of the goddess put in her appearance, or rather manifested herself. Her name was Siao-Ling, which means Young Lotus. This is what she wrote:

"Yesterday evening the brilliant snow and the icy wind cut like scissors.
I opened my door to contemplate the distant view.
I noticed that my plum-tree had added to its blossoms."

We then asked her if at that time of the year they were very busy in heaven.

"No," she answered; "all our days are like each other. It is only on New Year's Day that there is a great reception at the house of our Sovereign Master."

"Do the gods keep Lenten fasts?"

"Our Master before becoming a genii used to abstain from rice. Once immortal, he gave up food of all kinds. As regards the food of the gods, it is composed of venison, of dragons' livers, of mountain flowers, and fruits of Paradise, and so on."

"Is it true that besides heaven there is hell?"

"Hell and heaven are in the minds of men—one represents what is good, the other what is bad."

This exchange of questions and answers went off as easily as a conversation between friends. The answers were given much more quickly than at table-turning seances. Our amusing game lasted until long past midnight.

The above is a very accurate description of this kind of spirit seance, as generally practised in China. Of course, in different places the language and the way of thinking differs. It is because of the elevated style of the language used at these meetings that they enjoy so much favour with our literary men.

CHAPTER XXXI

PHRENOLOGY AND CHIROMANCY

IN no country, so much as in China, has the belief in phrenologists and chiromancists been so general. According to these men of science, every mark on the face and body has its meaning. In consequence, as such and such a sign, say, on your left eye, may be counter-balanced by some other sign, say, on your right cheek, it will be seen that a whole series of combinations and calculations has to be gone through before the definite diagnosis of a person can be obtained. When one goes to consult these oracles, they first of all examine your face, then the hands, and then the body, just as a doctor who wishes to thoroughly

examine a patient. After that they ask you to walk with your usual step, which is another factor in the combination. According to their lore, the various acts of life have significance—thus, slow eating, quick digestion, heavy sleep, and laziness in dressing are all very bad signs. A dark forehead means mourning for a near relation. A long face on a short body indicates a man of a calm and quiet life. A head short set in shoulders and a fat round stomach betoken a vile man. Long ears with the lobes ball-shaped are sure signs of a statesman. Large ears bent forward show that their owner leads an agitated and fatiguing existence. The famous Lao-Tse, the founder of the Taoist religion, had ears seven inches long. Thick and bushy eyebrows mean that their possessor will be rich in brothers and sisters. Each break in them means the loss of one brother, and the nearer the break is to the outer end, the younger that brother will be. When the eyebrows are longer than the eyes, that means that you have a literary man

before you. A spot at the side of the eye means that the person will have tears to shed. The nose should be large and thick. It is then the "Spring of the Mountain," the "Devil's Well," the "Lake of the Genii," or the "Tower of the Soul." The nose is considered the principal feature, because many of our sovereigns had very large noses, and notably Emperors Fou-Hi-U and Han-Kao-Tsou. The latter was further endowed with a thick, black beard, and besides having the face of a dragon, had seventy-two black birth marks below his hip. Another emperor, Weng-Ouang, who lived at an earlier date, had four breasts. It will be seen that teratology plays its part in China. To all these persons, as to Lao-Tse, the high places that they afterwards occupied were foretold. When the beard is bristly, the wearer is a sly man. A long beard is the sign of a long life. A brown beard betokens a general. A Buddhist high-priest, whose beard reached down to his knees, had his lofty position predicted on that account.

A big mouth will always have food. A black spot at the corner of the mouth promises good cheer for ever. A sly and deceitful man has thin and pinched lips. Red lips betoken good birth. White and equal teeth are signs of aristocratic connections. Hard teeth foretell premature old age. A soft tongue is the tongue of an orator. A rough voice, like that of a wolf, and waspish eyes belong to pitiless and unfeeling people.

A number of tokens are to be read in the hand. The observations of our chiromancists being almost identical with those of their European confrères, I will therefore not enter into these details, but will break the monotony of this description with a few anecdotes.

A literary man, named Tao-Kan, had a line of happiness which went in a perfect straight line from the wrist to the middle of the first joint of the middle finger. He was told that, if this line lengthened out any more, he might expect the highest honours.

He contented himself with pricking the extremity of this line with a needle, and writing the word "duke" with the blood; and as it happened he was created a duke.

Another, named Li-Kou, one day consulted a phrenologist, who pointed out to him that his temple-bones were very pronounced, and that they reached out to behind his head, and that, in consequence, he would be raised to a place of honour. This prophecy was duly realised.

A prefect of Ho-Nan, named Tcheou, met a phrenologist, who spoke to him as follows: — In three years you will be appointed minister and generalissimo, and one year later you will die of hunger. The prefect laughed, and said, that once in so high a position, he could not starve. But the phrenologist insisted that such was his destiny, and that he could not escape, basing his assertion on the fact that the little veins which usually flow vertically towards the mouth, had a horizontal position in his face.

All that had been predicted happened. After having risen to be a minister and commander-in-chief, the former prefect had to retire in disgrace, and died of a disease which prevented him from taking any food.

Duke Ouang-King-Tche, whose mother was a phrenologist, was born in a violet caul. When he was a little older, two long breasts grew under his arms. The mother announced a brilliant future for her son, and events proved that she was right.

It had been predicted to the mother of Empress Wou-Hao, of the dynasty of the Thang family, that she would have a child who would reign on the throne. As she was a simple middle-class woman, she did not place much faith in this piece of news. She had a daughter which she showed to a phrenologist, and told him that it was a boy. He made the child walk, and said, "If it be a boy, it will one day become emperor." As a matter of fact the child

became empress, and after the death of her husband mounted on the throne. She was one of the two empresses who have reigned over China.

An emperor, of the dynasty of the Tchings, had no children. He sent for a phrenologist, and asked him to tell him which of the ladies in the palace could make him a father. The phrenologist pointed out one, but added that after having given birth to a child she would be devoured by a tiger. The young woman in due time presented the emperor with a son. This point having been realised, the second prediction was thought about. Nobody had seen any tiger, and nobody thought that the prediction could be realised. The picture of a tiger was sent for, so that people might see what kind of an animal it was that was to prove fatal to the empress, and the young woman, wishing to destroy her enemy, struck the picture with so much force that she wounded herself, and died of gangrene in the arm.

A man aged thirty years had already lost

two of his brothers. His mother, fearing for his life, also went to a phrenologist, and asked if her last child was not also threatened with the same fate that had befallen his brothers. The phrenologist said that in order to answer he must pass one night with the young man. During his sleep he listened attentively to the breathing of the sleeper, and noticed that his breath seemed to come out of his ears. The phrenologist then comforted the mother, and said, "Your son will live long and happy, for he breathes like a tortoise."

There are, of course, numbers of quacks in the profession. The following is a story about one of them. It is rather amusing:—

The Governor of a province once sent for a phrenologist, and asked him to select amongst a number of ladies, who were all dressed in the same way, which was his wife. The phrenologist looked at them for a long time without being able to answer. At last he cried out, "It is she out of whose forehead a yellow cloud has just issued forth." Of

course everybody turned round to look at the real lady, and the phrenologist equally, of course, guessed at once which was the Governor's wife, and pointed her out with the most prophetic of gestures.

CHAPTER XXXII

DIFFERENT GAMES

ORIENTAL SHOOTING MATCHES

THESE matches were played with little rods, which the players had to throw into a long-necked and narrow-mouthed vase.

According to the Book of Rites, the host at a dinner party had to offer these arrows to his guests, and it was their duty to refuse them at first, but after some pressing to accept them. A servant then brought a vase on to the table, and the guests threw each two or four arrows into its mouth. At rich dinner-parties each arrow that entered the vase

was saluted with a burst of music from the orchestra. A horse or a carriage was given to the player who succeeded in putting all his arrows into the vase.

Our forefathers asserted that the character of a man could easily be told by his manner of playing this game. Suspicious and timid people threw their arrows for the most part askance, whilst weak-minded men invariably missed the mark. To succeed once and to miss twice was a sign of a want of perseverance, for to get the arrow exactly into the mouth of the vase a sharp eye and a good aim are necessary, and it will not do to do too much or too little. The throw must also be straight, and the aim exactly at the centre, and this, in conformity with human principles about straightforwardness and moderation, our forefathers used also to think that the activity put into play at this game resembled that of the conscience. To miss one's aim with an arrow was equivalent to neglecting a duty. The rule was to reflect with prudence, and to throw with measure.

He who did this was fitted to become an able statesman.

One wins without manifesting pride or showing his delight, another cheats or tries to draw too near the mark. These different ways of acting enable one to distinguish between honest and dishonest people.

To conclude, men used thus to be judged formerly by trifles of small importance in themselves, but which became powerful auxiliaries of truth. And it was for that reason that our ancestors included this game in their rituals.

THE CANDLESTICK

This game is also a very ancient one, and consists in getting a person to guess what object is hidden under a bell of non-transparent material, metal or china. Those who guess must not name the object directly, but must compose a quatrain referring to it.

For instance, supposing a lizard has been hidden, this is how a clever player would tell us that he had guessed it:

"It is not a dragon, for it has no horns;
It is not a serpent, for it has feet;
It can divide itself, and it can climb up walls.
It is a lizard."

One day three objects were hidden under the bell—a swallow's egg, a piece of honeycomb, and a spider. The following were the quatrains which revealed the nature of the hidden objects:—

"The first is one of the beloved of spring,
who climbs on the roofs of the drawing-rooms.
When the male or the female is fledged,
It at once spreads out its wings.
It is a swallow's egg.

The second is a house hung upside down.
It has a multitude of doors and windows.
The sweetest fluid is stored up in it,
And its inhabitants multiply in it.
It is a honeycomb.

The third resembles a long-footed slug.
It produces threads for making nets,
Into which all falls for its nourishment.
It is night which makes it happy.
It is a spider."

Other guessers were still more skilful, albeit they did not compose quatrains.

A Sovereign had placed a white bird under a bell, and ordered his Minister to guess. He answered that the emperor could not force him to guess. When he was asked why not, he said, "Let him, first of all, let his white bird escape."

On another occasion a rat was hidden. Everybody said it was a rat. But one very clever player insisted that there were four rats under the bell. The bell was removed, and it was found that, true enough, there were four rats. Whilst she had been in confinement, the rat had given birth to three little ones.

Guessing is done by means of the Koua, or diagrams, of which I have spoken elsewhere.

SHUTTLECOCKS

We also play with shuttlecocks, made of four duck feathers, the ends of which are passed through the square hole in the centre of one of our coins and bent down, which renders them very elastic. Ladies play with battledores; gentlemen use their feet, as in the English game of football. A certain height is fixed upon, and the player who fails to reach it loses the game. The same game is played with leather balls stuffed with cotton.

THE COIN GAME

A coin is thrown against the wall. The player whose coin springs back farthest from the wall begins. He throws his coin in any direction, and it is agreed upon that the other players must throw their coins so as to fall at such or such a distance from the place where his is lying. Those who manage to

do this, or get closest to the mark, win, those who are farthest off lose.

This game used formerly to be played by the ladies of the Court, but now-a-days it is only played by children in the streets.

CHAPTER XXXIII

GAMES OF CHANCE

CARD GAMES

OUR card games are more complicated than those played in Europe. One of the reasons of this is the number of cards in the Chinese pack, which contains 120, subdivided into four classes, corresponding with four colours, and into thirty species. There are thus only four cards of each species, and thirty of each class.

The pack includes nine cords; the first cord, the second cord, and so on, up to the ninth cord; nine cakes; nine faces; a red man; a civilian; and a butterfly.

Different kinds of games can, of course, be played with the same kind of cards.

FIRST CARD GAME—AWAITING THE CARD

Five players take their places at the table; the cards are shuffled, and are cut into eight packs of fifteen each. Three dice are cast, and three of the packs are removed in the order designated by the numbers on the dice. A third cast of the dice determines who is to take the first of the five remaining packs. The player on the right takes the second, and so on. The three packs that were removed are placed in a box, and the bottom card of all is turned round and given to the happy possessor of the first pack. Each takes his cards, and arranges them according to the kind and value of the cards, thus: first cord, second cord, third cord, and so on; or, first man, second man, third man; or, first cake, second cake, third cake; or, second cord, second man, second cake. To win, a player must have one or

more sets. There are seven sets, composed as follows :—

III.—Eighth cake, second cord, second man.
II.—Ninth man, eighth cord, butterfly.
V.—Ninth cord, the civilian, ninth man.
IV.—Ninth cord, the civilian, the red man.
VI.—Seventh cake, third cord, third man.
VII.—Ninth cake, first cord, first man.
I.—First, second, and third cakes.

The cards must be arranged in sets, as soon as they have been picked up off the table. If a player has only two cards of one set, he must hand an isolated card to the player on his right, who takes it, if it is of any service to him, and, in his turn, hands one of the cards in his hand to his neighbour on the right. If, on the other hand, he has no use for it, he rejects it, and takes the bottom card off the pack in the box. This he keeps and hands another card to the player on his right, and so on.

When one of the players has managed to get together all the seven sets, with the exception of one set, which lacks only one

card to complete it, he lays down on the table the leading card of one of the sets, and this gives him the right to take all the cards which are taken out of the box to complete his sets. If he succeeds in doing so, he wins.

The number of sets held by the winner are then counted, and he is paid, according to the amount fixed upon at the start, so much for each set.

Sometimes, also, it is the first card at the top of the pack placed in the box that is turned round. This card is called gold, and every player, who has a similar card in his hand, may use it instead of any other card that may be wanting to complete any set in his hand.

SECOND GAME—FISHING

This game is played by three players.

The cards are divided into eight packs of fourteen cards each, and eight cards remain over. The dice indicate which three packs are to be placed in the box. Two

packs are chosen at haphazard, and are added to the eight cards that remained over.

A second cast of the dice determines the distribution of the three remaining packs, which each player is to take.

The player who takes the last of these three packs must spread out on the table, face upwards, and according to their values, all the cards in the pack which is composed of the two selected packs, together with the eight cards that remained over, so that all the players can see what they are, just as is the case with the dummy at whist.

In reward for his trouble, the rule of the game awards him a privilege. He receives, at once, the top card in the box, which otherwise he would only have had later on, and so he knows at once what card to expect.

The first to play takes one of the cards in his hand to fish for one of the cards, which he hopes will be the same number (it is not necessary that it should have the

same picture) on the table with it. He then draws another card from the bottom of the pack in the box. Each of the other players does the same in turn. If the dummy is dead, that is to say, if none of its cards is of the number you want, you do not fish, but you throw out a card—or hook—without taking anything.

When all the cards have been drawn, each player counts his sets he is able to make up out of the cards he has fished. These sets are the same as in the preceding game, with the exception of number V. and number VI., which do not exist in this game. Each card in set number I. counts as thirteen points; in set number II., for twelve points; in set number III., for eleven points; in set number IV., for thirteen points; and in set number VII., for ten points. Outside the sets each card is worth only the same number of points as its numerical value. The first card is worth one, the second two, and so on.

THIRD GAME—THE PECKING GAME

The same cards are used, and two persons play. The cards are all placed together on the table, and each player takes three cards, of which he turns one up, so as to see which is to begin pecking. The first player throws one card on the table and the other does the same. If the player whose turn it is to throw sees that with the cards in his hand and those on the table he can make up a set he picks them up, and so the game goes on; the cards being taken three by three from the pack until all have been drawn. When that is done, the number of points held by each player, according to the system of counting described above, is counted.

In all these games, besides the stake, each player may place a sum of money or a single coin before him on the table. If he loses, he loses this money also; whilst if he wins, each player has to pay him an equivalent sum. This is betting added to staking. We have also cards representing

chess figures, in which the cannon, the carriage, and the horse form a set, as do also three similar cards, or the general, the councillor, and the elephant.

These cards are played in the same way as the others. Chinese cards are always much smaller than those used in Europe, measuring about one inch by two. These cards were invented under the reign of the Han dynasty, as a pastime and as a relief in solitude. But now-a-days they have become a social game, even in parties where people are far from wanting subjects of amusement.

CHAPTER XXXIV

LOTTERIES

WE have no official lottery, and, unless I am greatly mistaken, we never did have one. The private lottery, however, which is generally very advantageous to its promoters, does exist in China. When a person is in want of money, be it to pay for the funeral of a relation, or for the expenses connected with a marriage in his family, or to help one of his relations to go to Pekin for the examinations, he gets forty or fifty friends and acquaintances of his together, and begs them to take tickets in his lottery. These tickets cost so much, payable in fractions at each of the drawings. The first prize-

winner is, of course, the organiser of the lottery, and the amount at stake for the first drawing becomes his without any drawing being necessary to determine his right. That is in reality only an advance or loan to be repaid by instalments, for at all the subsequent drawings he pays just like his friends, and cannot win a second prize. The second and subsequent drawings determine the prize-winners, according to the number of points obtained by each player with the dice-box. Six dice are used. At each of these parties, which take place once a quarter or once every six months, the prize-winner always gives a dinner to the others. Everything is done so straightforwardly that in the end nobody loses, as each player can only win once. Nobody may play until he has paid the amount due on his ticket. The highest throw takes the whole stake, without deduction either for commission or interest, a small amount being retained for the dinner alone. In China we do not invest our money as is done every-

where else, and accordingly the last winner has no reason to regret that his turn to win only came at the end. On the contrary, this investment of small sums paid away from time to time, resulting in the acquisition of a lump sum at the end, is a very good saving operation. It helps to buy a piece of land, and at the same time he has the satisfaction of knowing that he has helped a friend in need. The use of these lotteries is very general amongst the middle classes, that is to say, amongst very honourable and very solvable people, who don't like to place themselves under obligations by asking for other kinds of loans, and are too proud to accept alms. Being in want of money they make use of this system of borrowing, with the obligation of repaying the sum received in a certain number of annuities. In the upper classes money is never needed, whilst amongst the lower classes the lottery system cannot be employed, because there is no guarantee of the solvability of the organiser. Amongst the

latter class, however, there is another kind of mutual help which renders the greatest services to the less fortunate members of Chinese society. Supposing that a workman has lost his father, his colleagues immediately subscribe enough to pay the funeral expenses. Or supposing that he wants to get married, arrangements are made to supply him at once with the funds he may require. Supposing his son passes his examinations, instead of sending him presents in kind, his friends send him money, so that he may have the means of paying his expenses connected with the celebration of his success. Thus we have no public charity funds. These are replaced by a friendly and solid understanding between people of the same class and position of society, who know each other's means, and understand how to help each other. Such mutual services are never refused. A respectable man can always count on the help of his friends under the circumstances mentioned. And this simple organisation forces

each man to be kind and helpful towards his neighbour, for nobody is sure of to-morrow. One does as one would be done by. Thus when one of these associates in benevolence happens to die, his widow and children continue to profit by it, and receive together with the inheritance of the deceased the tokens of gratitude from those he has helped, and which, had he lived, he would have enjoyed in due time. We have in this system a kind of pension and life insurance fund. Our system, however, forces every one—and just because he has no special right to anything—to be good and kind towards all his neighbours. Besides these regular and useful lottery organisations, there are others which are irregular and mischievous. These are mere forms of gambling pure and simple. I wish to speak, in the first place, of the game of Thirty-six Beasts, about which there has been so much talk of late—perhaps more so in Paris than in Camboja. This Cambojan roulette has been described over and over again, and is, it may be mentioned, an importation of Chinese

origin. We do not play this game with figures as our neighbours do, but with counters, on which the names of the animals are written. A group of individuals announce that they are going to open a bank, and this without formality of any sort. The news is discreetly and rapidly hawked about the town by the help of numerous agents. Every morning the bankers hoist up on to a high pole a bag, into which one of the thirty counters has been placed at haphazard. The public stake their money on any one of the thirty-six beasts, and those who have backed the beast whose name is inscribed on the counter in that bag that day, win thirty times what they have staked. The six last names are exclusively reserved to the bank. Needless to say, that the players almost always lose. Superstition, which always goes with gambling games, is not wanting here either. To guess the right name, players will put the list before their gods, or before Buddha, and beg him to give a sign by which they may know which beast is the winning one. Ashes

of incense falling on one of the names in the list, or the burning caused by a spark from one of the altar candles, are considered sure straight-tips to the gamblers, who, no matter under what sky they live, are always far more simple than intelligent.

As may be seen from this rapid analysis, the game of the thirty-six beasts is a kind of roulette, in which the names of animals are used instead of numbers. It is forbidden by law. Doubtless it is only another kind of lottery, but the daily drawings are too ruinous for those who are carried away by their passion for gambling. This is the reason why, in the Middle Empire, this dangerous game is forbidden. It is never let out to authorised speculators, and is always carried on in a clandestine manner, and is invariably very short-lived. If the organisers fall into the clutches of the law, they are very severely punished. Several years' imprisonment is not considered too severe a punishment for these harpies on the purses of the poor. On the other hand, the mutual help lottery is

considered by all as a useful and respectable undertaking, so much so, that, should it be found impossible to get a sufficient number of people to put their money into one of these speculations, the public officials may be applied to, and are always found ready to contribute their mites to an undertaking which is purely of self-help, and which has often relieved those miseries to which, alas! our poor human race is exposed in every clime and at every age.

CHAPTER XXXV

PUBLIC PLEASURES

THE THEATRES

THE theatre in China is always a private institution. We have no State-supported theatres, but, on the other hand, many rich people have theatres in their houses. In the north of China the public has its theatres the same as in Europe, where regular performances of fashionable pieces are given, and where people may dine in the boxes or on the balcony. Everywhere else there is nothing to be had in the way of theatrical representations, except from troupes of strolling actors, who play in the temples, restaurants, or

private houses. A set stage is to be seen in every temple, and performances are given on it on the feast day of the patron god of the temple, or for the accomplishment of certain vows. In both cases a troupe is sent for and a piece is selected. Whilst the organisers are taking their seats in the side balconies, which are our equivalent for your stage-boxes, the public is admitted gratuitously, and may place itself either in front or around the stage. At the end of each act—as a rule, only one-act pieces are played—an actor, disguised as a woman, offers the organisers of the fête a certain number of sticks to choose from. On each stick is written the name of one of the plays in the repertory of the troupe. A performance always includes five acts, or, as is usually the case, and generally means the same thing, five pieces, which have to be played through in the course of the evening. On the Emperor's or Empress's birthday similar performances are given before the houses of all the public officials, and take place accord-

ingly in the street. This is a treat for the people, who may attend without paying. There are stages in our big restaurants, and performances are given there twice or three times every week. The public seat themselves in parties of four or of six at tables, which are arranged in parallel rows to the stage, and in such a way that nobody has his back turned to the stage. As the customers of these restaurants are all rich people, the actors often get down off the stage to serve wine round, and to ask what piece they shall play. Should the piece thus chosen be found a success and well played, the person who chose it rewards the actors with cash. The actor takes the notes and places them on a tray, which he shows to the public in proof of the generosity of the giver. Should the piece be badly played, or any portion of it be badly sung, the public remains absolutely silent, without manifesting feeling of any kind. The practice of hissing is never indulged in in Chinese theatres. The silence of the public is the rebuke

administered to the actors. If, on the other hand, the piece has been creditably performed, there is only one voice among the public to applaud. All the spectators rise to their feet as of one common accord, and shout "Lao, Lao." This shows that in China we are both polite in our disapproval and prompt to enthusiasm when we are pleased. This national trait is the key to the conduct of the majority of the Chinese under all circumstances. They never criticise directly; they never noisily disapprove of anything, nor give vent to cries of anger: silence suffices for them; silence, which in itself alone has the eloquence of the severest comments, the most indignant exclamations, and is withal dignified; silence, which condemns without discussion and without appeal. A peculiarity of our theatres which may be noted here, is that the orchestra, instead of being placed in front of the stage, is always behind it, and plays no matter what piece of music, and always without notes. The conductor wields no baton, but has a kind of

tambourine in one hand and a pair of castanets in the other. The first indicates the time, the others changes in the tone. The actors always play by heart without the help of a prompter. We should laugh were we to see a musician using notes, or a gentleman hidden away in a kind of kennel whispering words to an actor at the moment perhaps when he is in the finest frenzy of passion. In front of the stage, on the two pillars which face the public, there may be generally seen amongst other decorations two bills inscribed with philosophical reflections.

The following is one of the best known :—

> "You may consider this performance as true or as false. It is always an image of life and of its conclusions."

Besides our big theatres we have also puppet shows, in which the puppets are tied to strings and worked by people hidden in the flies. Punch and Judy, worked by the fingers of an actor concealed behind a curtain, are very popular in China. These miniature theatres are much in favour with the people

of places which cannot support a real theatre. The performances are exactly the same as on the large stages, and are always accompanied with music and songs from behind the stage. The only difference is that the actors are in cardboard instead of being of flesh and blood, and are very small instead of being very big, a matter of little consequence after all. The size, the costumes, and the substance of the actors may be overlooked, for all that is merely superficial and a deceit of the eye. The truth—the great and immortal truth—is that our desires and our passions, our joys and our woes, are always the same, and never, never change. In every clime and in every age do we see the eternal human comedy repeat itself.

CHAPTER XXXVI

ANIMAL FIGHTS

I.—CRICKET FIGHTS

CHINA never knew those horrible arena fights which were the passing pleasures, and will be the eternal shame, of ancient Rome. We never gave for the amusement of our refined folk the sight of bloody fights between men and wild animals, "the whilom joy of the young vestal virgin." So it will be useless to look in China for any statue of a dying gladiator, or to search the ruins of the Colosseum. Nor has the bull-fight—last vestige of the tragic Circenses of long ago—ever been seen in China. We do, however, have animal

fights, but it will be seen that there is nothing very terrible about them.

To begin with, we set crickets to fight against each other. Yes, crickets. The modest denizens of the grass are terrible fighters, good company as they also are. Their fights, though wanting in *mise en scène*, are none the less interesting, and the people crowd to witness them. The crickets, once collected for the purpose in the fields, are very carefully trained, each prisoner being lodged in a little bamboo cage. Its food consists of grains of rice, to which a few leaves of salad are added. After having been trained in this way for some days, the captive is set at liberty temporarily, that is to say, and in a very relative manner. The object of his release, as a matter of fact, is only to give him the opportunity of trying his strength against some veteran of the cricket-ring.

The two combatants are placed in a bowl, which is generally made of wood, so as to prevent them from slipping about too

much. The trainer tickles their heads with a hair, to work them up to a sufficient degree of hatred and bad feeling. When this point has been reached, they dash violently against each other, and the first shock upsets one of the combatants, and decides the victory. The vanquished withdraws, ashamed and resigned. The victor, intoxicated with delight, claps his hands, and celebrates his triumph with piercing cries.

As soon as the fighting powers of the different insects have been tested by successive rehearsals, the more robust are pick out, and on these devolves the honour of appearing as champions in the public arena. Bets will be made on each of them with as much interest and passion as in Europe are made about horses. I hasten to add that these bets never exceed a few pence in value. The bettors are thus able to indulge themselves in their favourite pastime more frequently.

II.—QUAIL FIGHTS

We have just witnessed a very bloodless tournament. There are others of a more serious nature, and in which the combatants get rather more hurt. I speak of our quail-fights. Please do not think that I am about to describe such sanguinary spectacles as are afforded, for instance, to the English in their cock-fight. The quails fight, but only with the weapons with which Nature has provided them. They have no artificial spurs, and none of those perfections which add to the natural ferocity of the kings of the poultry-yard. The birds are trained for a few days, until their owner thinks them sufficiently prepared for the fray. The hour of battle has sounded. The quails, placed face to face, are excited by their masters. At last they dash at each other, each trying to seize his adversary while protecting himself against the other's blows. They chase each other, pursue, follow, run, jump, dodge, return, and escape again. At last they seize each other,

feathers begin to fly, a body to body fight begins, until, at last, one of the combatants is obliged to own himself defeated, and hastens to escape, with drooping wings, from the beak of his cruel vanquisher.

There is little cruelty in all this—it is rather a struggle than a fight. The combatants rarely hurt each other much, and if there is victor and vanquished, it may at least be said, as was said in the French comedy, "We know how to kill each other, and neither will die."

CHAPTER XXXVII

CONCLUSION

THE PLEASURES OF A PHILOSOPHER

THERE are perhaps in China alone more philosophers than could be found in all the rest of the world put together. To give an idea of the ways of thinking of these thinkers, who take their pleasure where they can find it, I will let one of them speak:

"The song of birds and the cries of the swallows announce the advent of spring; the fine weather invites one to walk abroad. I should have liked to respond to this call from Nature; my daily occupations have prevented me. I met yesterday at the

flower cottage a friend who blamed me for having failed to keep an appointment. I answered: 'Ah, I am not free as you are to do what I choose. I live dependent on another, to whom I am subjected as a minor is to his guardian. Ah! if you could only know how many writing brushes and how much paper I use in the course of one year. In the face of this beautiful weather, where Nature is developing with renewed vigour, I can only envy the pleasures of others without being able to share in them myself. But in compensation I find pleasure in passing my days of leisure in the bosom of my family, surrounded by those I love.

"'When seated by my fireside, I drink wine with my wife, and hold my children on my knees; I feel no other human ambition, and do not believe that the spirits in heaven are a whit happier than I am. Sometimes, as a change, we go and drink a cup of tea in the cottage, or look at the flowers in the garden. We are thus surrounded at home with joys which endure and do not change.

"'As regards what you call pleasure, it is only the result of a combination of circumstances, and may any day change and completely disappear. Good dinners, excellent wines, horses, games—all those things are but instantaneous metamorphoses, where no solid basis ensuring their eternal duration exists. That resembles a beautiful orange which might contain nothing but a spongy and savourless tissue. After the fireworks have died out, night rules again, and the darkness appears only all the darker.

"'Have you read the story of X——, who played the heavy swell, and threw money out of the window by handfuls. His friends besieged his house without interruption. His servants were prouder than the noblest lords. Night and day the only thought was what pleasure-party should be arranged for the following day. One might have imagined that his house was built over a gold mine, to see the life he led.

"'But at the end of a certain number of years his resources began to fail. He

could not, however, change his way of living.

"'He first of all resorted to loans from his generous friends, and next went to the pawnshop. When all their resources had been exhausted he ran away.

"'Oh! my friend, the number of rich dishes eaten by that man with an air of complete satisfaction. Oh! my friend, the number of beautiful women who were proud to be styled his friends even for a day. His name was known everywhere, in the theatres, in society, and everywhere where fashionable people meet together. Oh! the many fashions that he invented merely in colours and hues of silk. And the jewels that he distributed right and left.

"'All that was done with the money of other people, since his bills have not yet been paid. Is that pleasure? Come, you will admit that it is not.

"'Instead of gleaming for a short while and being eternally disgraced thereafter, I prefer during my moments of leisure to light my

incense-burner on my little table, and to sit at it chatting with our sages through my books. It is there that solid pleasures are to be found, far preferable to those which are only superficial. All that can be felt and seen has already been described, and costs nothing to read about. Songs, music, beautiful women, I see them and hear them in these admirable pages. Why, then, go running again through the grey dust to those places where your personality is effaced, and money alone reigns in uncontested mastery ?'"

THE END.

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